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THE

WORKS

Of the Moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN SHARP*,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of *YORK*.

VOL. V. CONTAINING,

EIGHT DISCOURSES on Several Subjects,

WITH

FOUR SERMONS on the IMITATION of CHRIST.

The THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for J. and P. KNAPTON, T. and T. LONGMAN, C. HITCH and L. HAWES, A. MILLAR, and J. and J. RIVINGTON. M.DCC.LIV.

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THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

(Prefix'd to the first Edition of Vol. 5, and 6.)

THE *First volume of archbishop* Sharp's *sermons was published by himself, being a collection of such as he had printed upon several occasions before the year* 1698.

The Second volume was published by his bookseller after his death, and takes in the remainder of his sermons, which were printed in his lifetime, and his two discourses upon conscience, *which were formerly publish'd without a name, and make part of* the collection of London cases.

And those two volumes contain all that he himself had suffered at any time to go abroad into the world.

But his executors were a little more liberal of his productions; and in 1717, they added to the collections made by himself, and then by his bookseller, as above-mentioned, two volumes more, consisting of sermons never before printed. But this step nevertheless was taken by them with due caution, and after advice had with some judicious prelates, who had read them after they were transcribed, and confirmed the resolution of making them public.

And now, after several years elapsed, two volumes more have pass'd the press, being the last addition that will be made to the collection of his works, save a small reserve of discourses in the popish controversy, which may possibly, some time or other, be published with other of his papers relating to that controversy, and penn'd likewise in those times.

The first and principal design of transcribing these, which are now printed, from the original manuscripts in short-hand, (for all his sermons were

were wrote in characters) was to preſerve and reſcue them from the danger they were in of being irretrievably loſt, by being buried in the cypher, if not extracted thence, and brought to light by one who was perfectly well acquainted with the characters he uſed, and with his peculiar manner of expreſſing and compounding them. The tranſcript was begun ſome years ſince, and proceeded very leiſurely, and with ſeveral interruptions, under the uncertain view of whether it ſhould ever be made public or no, till the year 1730, *when the greateſt part of it was finiſhed, peruſed and approved by competent judges, and at length prepared for publication.*

The reader therefore may be aſſur'd (and it is chiefly for his ſatisfaction in this matter that this advertiſement is prefixed to the edition) that theſe are the genuine works *of the* author, *to whom the title page aſcribes them; and that they are not raſhly obtruded upon the world, as poſthumous works too often are, but offered after mature deliberation, and under a real conviction of their being as perfect in their kind as any wherewith this laſt age hath been preſented.*

Indeed, the bare avouching them to be genuine, *ſuperſedes any further recommendation of*

them. Both the character and writings of the archbiſhop have been generally ſo well eſteemed, that they ſtand in no need of the ſuffrage of the publiſher, but will be able to ſupport themſelves (even in an age by no means favourable to good men and good books) ſo long as truth can ſtand her ground, and ſound reaſoning with perſpicuity ſhall be accounted the chief character of perfection in writing, eſpecially upon divine and moral ſubjects.

Moſt of the treatiſes in this firſt volume are compounded, ſome of two, ſome of three ſermons, joined together in the form of continued diſcourſes, which will account for the length of ſeveral of them, as it alſo gave occaſion to entitle them diſcourſes *rather than* ſermons. *The deſign of this diſpoſition was to preſerve the chain of reaſoning upon each ſubject entire and uninterrupted, without thoſe recapitulations, which, tho' neceſſary indeed under their diviſion into diſtinct ſermons, in order to accommodate them to the pulpit, yet are altogether unneceſſary to be retain'd for the peruſal of the reader, who would rather be incommoded than relieved by ſuch unſeaſonable breaks in the body of a juſt diſcourſe. But however no more liberty was taken with them, than would barely anſwer this end of*

of convenience, by omitting the introduction or preambles to the ſubſequent ſermons, when more than one were form'd upon the ſame text. And becauſe the ſame liberty could not be ſo well taken with the four laſt ſermons in this volume, which are all likewiſe upon one text, therefore they are publiſhed intire, as they were found in the copies.

The other volume conſiſts wholly of ſingle ſermons, publiſh'd verbatim *as they were preached, at leaſt without any deſign'd omiſſion or alteration. Moſt of them had been deliver'd at court, before their late majeſties king* William, *queen* Mary, *and queen* Anne, *as the dates prefixed to them will ſhew. And ſeveral of them were the ſermons which he uſually preach'd in his dioceſe, and elſewhere, in the latter part of his life, as being beſt calculated, in his own opinion, (ſo it may be juſtly preſum'd) for doing good to mankind, and the diſcharge of his own duty, as a miniſter of the goſpel.*

Could theſe ſheets have carried any impreſſion of that energy and zeal with which the living author of theſe diſcourſes addreſs'd them to his auditors, and to which they owed no ſmall ſhare of that beauty and influence which they

once

once had from his own mouth, they would have been more welcome and more valuable to the reader. One excellence indeed they cannot be depriv'd of, which, in ſome meaſure, will ſupply the want of thoſe external and additional graces that accompanied and adorned them in the pulpit, viz. *that ſpirit of piety which yet enlivens and breathes through them all, and demonſtrates them to be the real iſſues of his heart, and the very dictates of his ſoul, by ſuch marks of evidence as are eaſy to be diſcover'd, tho' difficult to be deſcrib'd, and impoſſible to be counterfeited.*

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DIS-

DISCOURSE I.

Concerning the Witneſs of the Spirit.

ROM. VIII. 16.

The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit that we are the children of God.

THIS paſſage is ſomething difficult, and commonly not rightly underſtood. For the clearing of which there are four things to be done:

I. To ſhew what is meant by the Spirit.
II. What is meant by the children of God.
III. What is meant by the Spirit's bearing witneſs with our ſpirit.
IV. How, or in what ſenſe the Spirit beareth witneſs with our ſpirit that we are the children of God.

The three firſt of theſe points are pretty obvious, ſo that I need ſpend no time in inſiſting on them.

1ſt, By the Spirit here is undoubtedly meant that Holy Spirit which our Lord promiſed he would ſend upon his diſciples, after he was aſcended into heaven; and which accordingly came upon them on the day of Pentecoſt, and which from thenceforward was to continue with the church to the end of the world. This Spirit is here in the text called the Spirit *itſelf*, to repreſent him as a perſon, becauſe in the verſe before the apoſtle had uſed this word ſpirit in another ſenſe, viz. for a ſtate and diſpenſation. *Ye have not*, ſays he, *received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the ſpirit of adoption*, Rom. viii. 15. That is, ye are not now in the Jewiſh diſpenſation, which is a diſpenſation of ſervants, wherein ye are left to your natural fears; but ye are in the diſpenſation of ſons: Ye may now call *God Father*; *for the Spirit itſelf* (as he goes on), that Spirit who hath the principal agency and management of this new diſpenſation, *bears witneſs with our ſpirit that we are the children of God.*

But, 2dly, What is meant by being the children of God? To this I anſwer, that to be a child of God, in the ſcripture-phraſe, is to be an heir of immortality; or to be an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven: That is to ſay, either in actual poſſeſſion of it, or in right and title to it. Thus our Saviour tells us, Luke xx. 35, 36. *That they which ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain that future world and the reſurrection from the dead, can die no more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the reſurrection.* And thus our Saviour himſelf was ſtiled God's Son, as upon other accounts, ſo alſo upon this, that God begot him from the dead, and exalted him to an immortal glorious life in heaven. *Thou art my*

Son

Son (ſaith God) *this day have I begotten thee*, Pſal. ii. 7. Which paſſage the apoſtle applies to our Saviour's reſurrection, Acts xiii. 33. And it is with this reſpect that St. John ſpeaks—*Beloved, now are we the ſons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be: but we know that when he ſhall appear we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. So that to be a ſon or a child of God, and to have a right and title to eternal life, is the very ſame thing. As alſo ſufficiently appears from the next words that follow after my text, *If we be children, then are we heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt: if ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may be alſo glorified together*, Rom. viii. 17.

But, 3dly, What is meant by this expreſſion of the Spirit's bearing witneſs with our ſpirit? Is it meant that the Holy Spirit doth, by his ſecret inſpirations, his inward ſuggeſtions to the minds of good men, poſſeſs them with an opinion, or, if you will, with an aſſurance, that they are the children of God, and that they ſhall certainly go to heaven, without giving them any reaſon for it. Thus indeed it is commonly taken. But I can by no means think that this is the meaning of the words. I conceive that which the apoſtle here meant, is this; *that the Holy Spirit by the viſible ſenſible operations which he wrought in, and amongſt chriſtians, gave an aſſured proof and teſtimony to their minds, that God owned them for his people, and as ſuch would glorify them with his Son Jeſus at the laſt day.* That I take to be the meaning of the expreſſion. But now what theſe operations were, or in what way the Spirit did, or doth witneſs with our ſpirit, is my

4th Inquiry; which I ſhall dwell longer upon.—— And here it is fit we ſhould take notice, that there is a

twofold witneſs or teſtimony of the Spirit to our being the children of God: The one, general and public, reſpecting the whole church, or the whole body of thoſe who profeſs the chriſtian faith, in oppoſition to all unbelievers; the other, particular and private, and only reſpecting ſingle perſons. Both theſe ways, I ſay, doth the Spirit witneſs with our ſpirit that we are the children of God. And to both theſe ways, it is probable, the apoſtle had reſpect in this text.

I. I begin with the public witneſs. Firſt of all, I ſay, the Spirit gave an undeniable proof to chriſtians, that they were the children of God, by the public teſtimony he gave to the truth of the promiſes of the goſpel; in deſcending upon the apoſtles on the day of Pentecoſt, and enabling them to ſpeak all languages, to cure all diſeaſes, to caſt out devils, to raiſe the dead, to foretel things to come, and to work all ſorts of miracles, for the confirmation of the chriſtian faith: And, which ought to be particularly taken notice of, when he gave them a power likewiſe to transfer theſe gifts and powers upon others, even as many as they ſhould lay their hands upon them; ſo that not only the apoſtles, but a great number of other believers, in all places, were able to work miracles, for the atteſtation of the truth of Chriſt's doctrine.

Here now was as plain a teſtimony of the Holy Spirit to the minds of all chriſtians, that they were the children of God, that they had the true religion among them, that they, in oppoſition both to Jews and Pagans, were God's peculiar people, and that he would at the laſt day, when this world ſhould have an end, own them as ſuch, and reward them with everlaſting life, as our Saviour had promiſed them.—I ſay, here was as effectual a witneſs of the Spirit to the truth

truth of all this, as was poſſible to be given. It was both a witneſs to themſelves, and to all the world: A witneſs to their own minds and ſpirits, for their infinite comfort under all their preſent diſtreſſes, and for their encouragement, to perſevere ſtedfaſtly in the chriſtian religion, whatever trials they ſhould be called out unto: A witneſs alſo to the unbelieving world, for their confuſion, if they did not quit their infidelity, and enter themſelves into this family of God, this ſociety of chriſtians, to whom the promiſes of adoption and eternal life were made over.

But it will be ſaid, how doth this witneſs of the Spirit concern us who live at this day, and ſee none of thoſe extraordinary miraculous effects of the Holy Ghoſt? How is this a teſtimony to our ſpirits, that we are the children of God? I anſwer, it is the ſame witneſs and teſtimony of the Holy Spirit with our ſpirits, that it was when St. Paul wrote this epiſtle. We do not, indeed, ſee now thoſe viſible effects and operations of the Holy Spirit, for the convincing us of the truth of Chriſt's promiſes, that were then to be ſeen; but the reaſon is, becauſe there is no need of it: for if that was a good witneſs to the minds of chriſtians then, it is ſtill a good witneſs to us now. If they, from what they ſaw, might reaſonably be convinced that the chriſtian religion was the way to heaven; we, from what we read of thoſe things, and the certainty we have of the truth of them (in all the ways that a thing done long ago may be made certain to us) we ſay, we have the ſame reaſon to be convinced that chriſtianity is the way to heaven ſtill.

If it be ſaid, that evidence of ſenſe is of greater force than evidence of report, let it come from what hands it will; I anſwer I grant it to be ſo: But yet

what we want of the Spirit's witneſs, by reaſon of our not being preſent when thoſe things were done, is abundantly made up by the Spirit's witneſs in our days, to the truth of Chriſt's promiſes, which they who lived then, had not the benefit of. As for inſtance, the fulfilling of our Saviour's promiſes, time after time; the ſtrange ſucceſs and ſpeedy propagation of Chriſt's religion throughout the world; the miraculous preſervation of it in the world; the deſtruction of the devil's empire, where-ever the chriſtian faith got footing; with a great many other things, not now ſeaſonable to be inſiſted on; ſo that, taking theſe things together, the fulneſs of the evidence we have for the truth of the matters of fact, wrought by the Spirit in the ancient times for the confirmation of Chriſt's doctrine, and the new arguments that the ſame Spirit hath given us ſince; we, at this day, have as much reaſon to ſay with St. Paul, as any in thoſe days had, *The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God:* That we chriſtians, in contradiſtinction to men of all other religions, are the very people of God, and heirs of eternal life, if we do not forfeit our title to it by a looſe and wicked life.

Two or three practical inferences I deſire to draw from this point, before I proceed any further.

1. It ought to be matter of unſpeakable comfort and rejoicings to us, that we have ſuch an infallible witneſs as the Spirit of God, to bear teſtimony to our minds, that we are in a right and ſure way to eternal happineſs: that we wander not in the dark, uncertain what courſe to ſteer, and uncertain what will become of us hereafter: (as they who are without Chriſt, muſt needs be) but have all the aſſurance that honeſt men need, or wiſe men can reaſonably deſire; that by believing

lieving and practiſing our religion we ſhall undoubtedly arrive at immortality. O what a lively ſenſe ought we to have of this ineſtimable bleſſing! How deeply ought we to be affected with it! How heartily ought we to praiſe God for it! We ſhould never in our devotions leave this unmentioned. We ſhould perpetually acknowledge in the moſt grateful manner, the infinite obligations that God hath put upon us, in diſpoſing us into ſo happy a country as this of ours is, where we have the privileges of a chriſtian education, and enjoy ſo plentifully the certain means of obtaining eternal glory.

2. The Spirit's bearing witneſs to our minds thus effectually, that we are the children of God, ſhould be an argument to us above all others, that we ſhould never depart from our chriſtian profeſſion; but that we ſhould hold it to our lives end, without wavering; nay, and be zealous for it: For where can we have eternal life but in the faith of Jeſus Chriſt? And to what people in the world hath the Holy Spirit ſet his ſeal that they are God's people, but to the ſociety of the chriſtian church? This conſideration ſhould inſpire us all with an invincible reſolution to maintain our faith againſt all oppoſition; it ſhould fortify our minds againſt all the ſcoffs and railleries we can meet with from profane, atheiſtical men, in the profeſſion of it. It ſhould comfort and relieve us under all the difficulties, or hard circumſtances, that we can be expoſed to upon the account thereof. And laſtly, It ſhould animate us with ſuch a conſtancy, in adhering to this faith, that we ſhould rather chuſe to quit our lives, than to depart from it.

3. We are always to remember, that when the Spirit gave his witneſs to the chriſtians that they were the children of God, it was to the chriſtians, as profeſſing

the true faith of Chriſt: to the chriſtians, as profeſſing that faith which was delivered by our Lord Jeſus, and preached by his apoſtles to the world, and afterwards by the ſame apoſtles, or apoſtolical men, put into writing, and conveyed down to us in the ſcriptures of the New-teſtament: And therefore it infinitely concerns us to hold ſtedfaſtly that faith which Chriſt thus deliver'd, and the apoſtles preach'd, and the ſcriptures contain, (as, God be thank'd, That and no other, is the faith which our church holds forth) and by no means to add to it, or detract from it. So long as we believe and profeſs chriſtianity, as it was taught in the apoſtolical times, ſo long we are ſure the Spirit beareth witneſs to us, that we are the children of God. But if we take up, or receive any other faith, from whatſoever quarter, or under whatſoever ſpecious name it comes recommended; any faith that is contradictory to, or inconſiſtent with that of the firſt ages; any faith that may be called another from that which is ſcriptural, and was *once delivered to the ſaints*, Jude v. 3. then we can no longer warrant that the Spirit of God ſhall bear witneſs with our ſpirits that we are the children of God.

4. But laſtly, Though it be here ſaid of all chriſtians in general, that the Spirit bears witneſs to them that they are the children of God, yet it is to be remembered that no benefit will hereby accrue to any particular perſon that profeſſeth chriſtianity, if he does not lead his life according to the precepts of it. And therefore it mightily concerns us all, to adorn our profeſſion by a holy life: To take care *leſt* that *a promiſe being made unto us of entring into God's reſt, we ſhould fall ſhort thereof*, (Heb. iv. 1.) thro' a careleſs, ſenſual ungodly life. It is true that all men are by baptiſm made

made the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life: But yet, no man shall actually inherit that everlasting life, but he, who *through the Spirit mortifies the deeds of the body*, Rom. viii. 13. and *lives righteously, soberly and godly in this world*, Tit. ii. 12. If it be said, how can this be, that any of those to whom the Spirit witnesseth that they are the children of God should prove the children of the devil? The answer is easy; that whatever they may prove in the event, yet by their christianity they are the children of God, and have a right and title to the inheritance of christians: But if they depart from the rules of their religion, they forfeit that right, and they cancel that title by their wickedness and folly. They are just in the case of disobedient, incorrigible children, who were born heirs to a good estate; but through their manifold miscarriages and undutifulness have so provoked their parent, that he at last thinks fit to disinherit them, and cut them off from that which nature and his fatherly kindness first designed them to.

Thus far I have pursued the first notion I gave of the witness of the Spirit, that which is general and public, and concerns the whole body of christians; and it is in this sense that some of the most learned expositors do understand this text. But yet for all that, upon a more strict consideration of the apostle's design in this chapter, and of what goes before, and what follows after my text; I am very inclinable to think that St. Paul in these words does more principally intend (or at least that he hath a particular respect unto) that latter notion I gave of the witness of the Spirit: I mean, that private testimony which the Holy Spirit of God gives to the minds of particular christians, that they are in the favour of God, and shall be rewarded with our Lord Jesus at the last day. He doth not exclude the public miraculous

teſtimony which the Holy Spirit in thoſe days gave to the chriſtian cauſe; but he ſeems to take in alſo another teſtimony of the Spirit, by which every chriſtian then might, and all chriſtians, to the end of the world, may, conclude that they in particular were and are the elect of God, and ſhall certainly one day be glorified with our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. This is that which I called the private witneſs of the Spirit, and which only concerns particular perſons; and of this I come now to treat in the ſecond place.

II. If it be aſked, what this private witneſs of the Spirit is, to the minds of particular perſons, that they are the children of God, or wherein it doth conſiſt? I anſwer very briefly, as far as we can gather from the apoſtle's diſcourſe, both in this place, and in others of his epiſtles, it conſiſts in this, viz. In the Holy Ghoſt's dwelling in the hearts of particular chriſtians, and enabling them to mortify their luſts, and to lead an holy life, in all ſobriety, righteouſneſs and godlineſs. Now this indwelling of the Spirit, and theſe fruits thereof, where-ever they are found, are to thoſe that have them a ſeal of the Spirit of God upon their ſouls, *whereby they are ſealed to the day of redemption*, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, *Eph.* iv. 30. They are *an earneſt*, or *a pledge* of their future happineſs, as the ſame apoſtle in other places calls them, 2 *Cor.* i. 22. 2 *Cor.* v. 5. *Epheſ.* i. 13, 14. Laſtly, they are a teſtimony or evidence to their ſpirits, that they are the true ſons of God, and ſhall be glorified with Jeſus Chriſt in another world; which is the tenour of his expreſſion in my text.

Now, that this is the true meaning of the Spirit's witneſſing with our ſpirit that we are the children of God, ſo far as that witneſs concerns particular perſons,

ſons, will appear evidently from what goes before in this chapter. The main deſign that the apoſtle is purſuing, is, to encourage and animate the chriſtians of his time, againſt the ſufferings and perſecutions they were likely to meet with in this world, upon account of their religion; and this he doth chiefly from the conſideration of the great rewards that were laid up for them in the other world. And to this purpoſe he tells them in the tenth verſe, *If Chriſt be in you, the body is indeed dead, becauſe of ſin; but the Spirit is life, becauſe of righteouſneſs*, Rom. viii. 10. That is, your body is indeed obnoxious to all ſorts of outward calamities, and even to death itſelf, which is entailed upon the ſons of Adam, upon account of ſin: But yet the Spirit of Chriſt, which he hath given to dwell in you, will procure you a glorious life in another world, upon account of that inward ſpiritual righteouſneſs which he worketh in you. This is the ſenſe of that verſe. But becauſe what he here ſaith is very ſhortly expreſſed, and ſo might be obſcure, he explains himſelf ſufficiently in the next verſe. *If*, ſays he, *the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*, v. 11. Here the apoſtle ſpeaks plainly, and his words need no comment: And I deſire you to attend to them; for they ſeem to fix the ſenſe of all that follows after. That which comes next in the three verſes following, are theſe words; *Therefore, brethren, ye are debtors, not to the fleſh, to live after the fleſh*, Rom. viii. 12. (and the reaſon he intimated before; for it was that which wrought death in the world); *but to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit: for*, ſays he, *if you live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die; but if ye thro' the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live*, ver. 13. that is, live in another world.

world. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God* (that is, as many as the Spirit of God dwells in) *they are the ſons of God*, ver. 14. that is, as I explained before, they are the children of God, becauſe they ſhall be the children of the reſurrection: *For*, as he goes on in the next verſe, *ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear*, ver. 15. *viz.* ye are not brought back again to ſuch a diſpenſation, as the Jews were, under the moſaical covenant, which made no promiſes of eternal life; but the people under it were left to their own fears and natural apprehenſions of a future judgment; and the letter of the law gave them no relief againſt it: *But*, ſays the apoſtle, *ye have received the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry, abba, Father*; viz. Ye are now in a gracious diſpenſation, in a filial ſtate, where ye may chearfully call God, abba; which, being interpreted, is, father; and, as his children, not doubt of receiving an inheritance from him in the world to come. And then come in the words of my text: *The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt, if ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may alſo be glorified together*, Rom. viii. 16, 17. The plain ſenſe of which words, if we make them to cohere with all that went before, cannot appear to be other than this: viz. That that Spirit which dwelt in Chriſt, now dwelling in chriſtians; that Spirit which raiſed up Jeſus, now raiſing up his members from the death of ſin, to a life of righteouſneſs, is a witneſs to all thoſe in whom he doth thus dwell; to all thoſe who are thus led by him; is a ſtrong evidence to their minds that they are the ſons of God, and the brethren of Chriſt, and conſequently that they ſhall be ſharers of his inheritance, and be glorified with him; if ſo be they do patiently and conſtantly

ſtantly endure the ſufferings they are called out to for his cauſe, as he did before them.

This, as I take it, is the full ſenſe of this text. And now, I hope, I may have liberty to make ſome practical obſervations upon it; and then I ſhall conclude.

1. And firſt of all, from this account that has been given, we learn, what the true marks are of a child of God; or, upon what grounds any perſon can rationally aſſure himſelf that he is in God's favour, and ſhall go to heaven. For as the miraculous operations of the Spirit in the days of the apoſtles were the public teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt, that the chriſtian church in general was the people of God, and deſigned to everlaſting happineſs; ſo the Spirit's dwelling in the ſouls of particular chriſtians, is his private teſtimony to particular perſons, that they are effectually the children of God, and ſhall be actually raiſed up to everlaſting happineſs. This, I ſay, is the great, if not the only evidence that any perſon can give to himſelf of his particular right and title to the kingdom of heaven. And this, I think, is clear from what has been ſaid: But if it be not, pray obſerve the apoſtle's words a little before at verſe 9th, which will put the matter out of doubt, viz. *Ye are not*, ſaith he, *in the fleſh, but in the Spirit, if ſo be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man hath not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.* So that to have the Spirit of Chriſt dwelling in us, is a certain proof that we belong to Chriſt. And on the other ſide, not to have him dwell in us, is a certain proof that we do not belong to Chriſt.

But doth not the Spirit dwell with all chriſtians? I anſwer, No; by no means. All perſons indeed that are baptiz'd, and profeſs chriſtianity, are by deſignation the temples of the Holy Ghoſt; for the Holy

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Spirit would dwell in them: But yet for all that, he doth not actually dwell in all, becauſe ſome of them do themſelves put a bar to it. The Holy Spirit dwells with his church; is preſent in all Chriſt's public ordinances and adminiſtrations, and is ready to aſſiſt every perſon that doth with ſincerity apply himſelf to the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt. But he dwells not with any ſoul but thoſe that have ſo far made uſe of his aſſiſtance, and encouraged his holy motions, that they begin to frame their actions according to his conduct, and he becomes a principle in them of a holy chriſtian life.

But you will ſay, this is hard to be underſtood: You tell us, that the Spirit's dwelling within us is the evidence of our being the ſons of God; but ſtill we are at a loſs to know when the Spirit dwells within us. I anſwer, you need not be much at a loſs for the knowing of that; for St. Paul in thoſe very paſſages I have now read to you, has given you ſufficient rules by which you may judge, whether the Spirit of God dwell in you, or no: And they do amount to this: We may know we have the Spirit, *if we be led by the Spirit*, ver. 14. that is, if our deſigns and actions be in the general courſe of our lives ſuitable to the precepts of the goſpel. Again, we may know we have the Spirit, *if we do not live after the fleſh, but endeavour to mortify the deeds of the body*, ver. 13. Again a third time in this chapter he tells us how we may know whether we be in the fleſh, or in the Spirit. *They*, ſaith he, *that are after the fleſh, do mind the things of the fleſh: but they that are after the Spirit*, do mind *the things of the Spirit*, ver. 5.

If all this be not plain enough, let us conſult him farther in another epiſtle, viz. to the Galatians, chap. v. where he tells us plainly, that we may know we are in the fleſh, if we do the works of the fleſh; and we may know

know that we are led by the Spirit, if we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Galat. v. 19, 20, 21. *The works of the flesh*, says he, *are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But*, on the other side, (v. 22, 23, 24.) *the fruits of the Spirit* are these, *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:——— And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* I do not know what plainer signs or characters can be given, either on the one hand, of sin reigning in us; or on the other hand, of the Spirit's dwelling in us, than these that are here given by the apostle.

2. Taking now this for granted, I observe in the second place, that that which some people take for a mark of a true child of God, is no mark at all. Some do so understand these words in my text of *the Spirit's witnessing with our spirit, that we are the children of God*, as to conclude that if they have an impulse, or impression on their own minds, that they are in a state of grace, and the elect of God: If it be strongly whispered and suggested to them, though they do not know why, nor wherefore, that they are in the right way, and that God accepts of them; why this passes with them *for the witness of the Spirit of God with their spirits, that they are the children of God.* And on the other side, others that have not these comfortable impressions, these satisfactions, this assurance (as they call it), in their own minds; but are fearful, and

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apt to diſtruſt their condition, and to believe the worſt of themſelves, [Theſe] conclude, that they have not this *witneſs of the Spirit* that my text ſpeaks of; and conſequently, that their portion is like to be very miſerable. But in truth, neither the one nor the other of theſe perſons I have now repreſented, do reaſon right in this matter. The former are not one whit the better or the ſafer for their comfortable perſuaſion of themſelves: Nor are the latter in any more danger for their melancholy apprehenſions concerning their condition. Both the one and the other muſt be tried by the fruits they bring forth in their lives, and not by unaccountable impulſes. The moſt ſanguine man, the moſt confident and aſſured perſon, if he do not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit I have now named, hath no teſtimony from the Holy Ghoſt, (whatever he fancies) *that he is the child of God.* And again, the moſt dejected and melancholy ſoul, if he do in his life and converſation bring forth theſe fruits, he hath *the witneſs of the Spirit that he is the child of God*, tho' he be not aware of it; and tho' through the preſent diſorders of his mind he is not capable of receiving any comforts from it.

3. But laſtly, and to conclude, ſince all the evidence we can give to ourſelves that we in particular are the children of God, is that the Holy Spirit dwelleth within us; how infinitely doth it concern us, both to endeavour that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould take up his habitation in our hearts; and alſo, after he hath ſo done, to be careful that we do not by our ill treatment of him give him cauſe to depart from us. Would we invite and prevail with the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within us? The way is, to forſake our ſins, and to devote ourſelves entirely to God's ſervice; and to ſolli-

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cit him moſt earneſtly with our daily prayers, that he would purify our hearts, that they may become a temple fit for him to dwell in; and withal to encourage and improve every good motion and every opportunity that he puts into our hands of growing in virtue and goodneſs. By this means we ſhall allure the good Spirit of God to take up his lodging in our hearts. And when once it is our happineſs to have received ſo illuſtrious a gueſt; oh! with what zeal ſhould we endeavour to preſerve him! how careful ſhould we be, not to admit any thing into our hearts that may grieve him, or give him occaſion of diſpleaſure! How watchful ought we to be over ourſelves, that we do not engage in any unlawful courſe, any ſin againſt conſcience! for that is directly to affront him, and to take part with his enemies. With what diligence ought we to guard ourſelves from all ſorts of impurity and ſenſuality! becauſe theſe are the things that of all others do moſt defile our bodies, and render them unfit for the Spirit of purity to dwell in, as the apoſtle often tells us (1 Cor. vi. 13—20.) Laſtly, how induſtrious ſhould we be to take all occaſions of improving every grace and every virtue with which God hath adorned our ſouls: And in order to that, to make uſe of all thoſe means that our Lord Jeſus has appointed for that purpoſe; amongſt which the frequent receivings of the bleſſed ſacrament is a principal one.

Theſe are the methods by which we may ſecure the Holy Spirit to ourſelves. This is the way to make him dwell with us for evermore: And never to leave us, never to quit his habitation; but to be our conſtant guide here, and our rewarder hereafter: To be in us a conſtant principle of grace in this world, and to raiſe us up to an eternal and unſpeakable glory in the world to come.

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DISCOURSE II.

Concerning the Advocateſhip of the Holy Spirit, and the proper diſtinctions between that and the Advocateſhip of our Saviour.

[Deliver'd in Three Sermons.]

JOHN XIV. 16.

And I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

Or thus:

I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Advocate, that he may abide with you for ever.

THE Word in the original is, παράκλητον, which, becauſe it comes from a word that hath a double ſignification, our tranſlators made a doubt, whether they ſhould render a comforter, or an advocate: and therefore for ſureneſs

neſs ſake they put in both the words; the one in the text, and the other in the margin of our bibles. So alſo in John xv. 26. and xvi. 7. and ver. 26. of this chapter.

But undoubtedly παράκλητος here hath the ſignification of an advocate, and not of a comforter, as I ſhall ſhew by and by: And therefore I ſhall all along follow the latter tranſlation.

The words are part of the laſt ſermon that our Saviour made to his diſciples, immediately before his paſſion. And indeed a very comfortable ſermon it was, and very ſeaſonable to his apoſtles, who at that time ſtood in great need of comfort. They now ſaw their dear Lord and maſter was to be taken from them, and to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and to be crucified. Matt. xxvi. 2. Upon this, *ſorrow* (as there was great reaſon) *filled their hearts*, John xvi. 6. and they could not but look upon themſelves in a moſt deplorable and deſolate condition. Our merciful Saviour was not wanting to them upon this ſad occaſion; but as he had always treated them with the greateſt kindneſs and tenderneſs in the world, ſo now he more eſpecially ſets himſelf to eaſe their troubled minds, and to fortify them againſt the approaching diſaſters. Many excellent conſiderations he propoſeth to this purpoſe: But three things eſpecially he inſiſts on in this chapter; which, if they were well conſidered, would afford them unſpeakable conſolation, by letting them ſee that it was much better for them that he ſhould leave them, than that he ſhould ſtay any longer with them. The firſt thing was, that he did not mean to leave them with a deſign of returning no more to them, but he only went as an harbinger before them, to prepare them places in his heavenly king-

kingdom. And he would in due time come again and fetch them, and bring them thither, where they ſhould for ever enjoy him, without fear of parting any more. *Let not*, ſaith he, *your hearts be troubled*; * *believe in God, believe alſo in me. In my Father's houſe are many manſions: If it were not ſo, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you: And* † *having gone and prepared a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, there you may be alſo*, John xiv. 1, 2, 3. Secondly, This further eminent advantage they ſhould receive from his going to his Father, that thereby they ſhould be ſecure of a friend and a patron in the court of heaven. Hereby he ſhould be put into a capacity of doing every thing for them that they deſired: For ſo great from henceforward ſhould his authority be with his Father, and ſo powerful his interceſſion, that they ſhould aſk nothing in his name, (if it was for the intereſt of the church) but it ſhould be granted. *Becauſe I go unto my Father*, ſays he, *whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, that will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do it.* John xiv. 13, 14. Theſe things conſidered, they had no reaſon to be troubled at his departure; but rather to rejoice. *If ye loved me*, ſays he, *ye would rejoice, becauſe I go to the Father.* John xiv. 28. Eſpecially when he aſſured them, in the third place, that tho' he left them for the preſent, yet as ſoon as he was aſcended to the Father, he would ſend down another, to ſupply his place with them: One that ſhould take care of their concerns; ſhould manage all their affairs; ſhould be their great patron and advocate in the world; and

* It is the marginal reading.

† ἐαν πορευθῶ, *after* I ſhall have gone, *&c.* See *Grot.*

and he ſhould never leave them, but abide with them and their ſucceſſors, and with all believers to the end of the world: And this ſhould be no other than the Spirit of truth. This is the ſenſe of my text: *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another advocate, that he may abide with you for ever*; John xiv. 16. *even the Spirit of truth*, as it follows in the next verſe, *whom the world cannot receive; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you*, John xiv. 17.

Now upon this account his ſtay among them was ſo far from being deſirable, that he tells them in the ſixteenth chapter, ver. 7. *that it was expedient for them that he ſhould go away; for if he did not go away* (if he did not aſcend to the Father) *the advocate would not come unto them: But if he departed, he would ſend him to them.* The coming of the advocate, then, was to be the effect of his aſcenſion into heaven, and of his powerful interceſſion with God. And that is the reaſon why he ſays in the text, *I will pray the Father*, and he ſhall *give him unto you.* And that is the reaſon why St. John ſays in another place, (ch. vii. 39.) that *the Holy Spirit was not yet given, becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified.*

There are three points which the text leads me to inquire into: All of them very uſeful, becauſe very conducing to a right underſtanding of the chriſtian diſpenſation, and that method which God ſet on foot for the bringing men to ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt.

1. And firſt of all; Whereas our Saviour here and in other places ſpeaks of the Holy Ghoſt under the notion of a *Paraclete*, which our tranſlators commonly expreſs a comforter, but I think might more properly be render'd an advocate;— I ſhall inquire into the importance of that term, and give an account of the true notion of it, that ſo we may all know what we

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mean when we call the Holy Ghoſt a *Paraclete*, or advocate, or comforter.

2. Secondly; whereas our Saviour here ſaith that he will pray the Father, and he ſhall give them another advocate; by which it is implied that the Holy Ghoſt is not the only advocate, but that our Saviour is one advocate, and the Holy Ghoſt another; I ſhall therefore inquire into the difference between our Saviour's advocateſhip, and that of the Holy Ghoſt; or, in what reſpect Jeſus Chriſt is our advocate, and in what reſpect the Holy Ghoſt is.

3. Thirdly, whereas our Saviour tells his diſciples that this advocate whom he ſhould ſend, even the Spirit of truth, ſhould abide with them for ever; and yet it is plain matter of fact that he doth not now abide in the church in the ſame manner that he did with the apoſtles; I ſhall therefore in the laſt place inquire into the ſeveral acts, or inſtances, or expreſſions of this advocateſhip of the Holy Ghoſt, and ſhew, which of them were peculiar to the times of the apoſtles, and the primitive chriſtians; and which of them were common to all the times and ages of chriſtianity.

I. I begin with the notion or ſignification of the term *Paraclete*, which is here and in other places uſed by St. John to expreſs the office of the Holy Ghoſt, and which accordingly hath ever ſince been by the church in a manner appropriated to him. Thus in the *Te Deum*, *Alſo the Holy Ghoſt the paraclete:* for that is the word in the original. It is uſed but five times in the whole New-teſtament: Four times in this goſpel of St. John, where the Holy Spirit is ſpoken of; and once in an epiſtle of the ſame apoſtle, where our Saviour is ſpoken of. 1 Ep. c. ii. v. 1. *If any man*, ſays

ſays he, *ſin, we have a paraclete with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our ſins.*

But now in theſe places where it is applied to the Spirit, our tranſlators have always render'd it comforter; and in that place where it is applied to our Saviour, they have render'd it advocate: But what foundation there is for this diſtinction, I do not know. It ſeems more reaſonable to think that St. John meant the ſame thing by παράκλητος when he uſed it of our Saviour, and when he uſed it of the Holy Ghoſt: And therefore ſince it is clear that in that text where this name is given to our Saviour, it ought to be render'd advocate, and not comforter [for to tranſlate the apoſtle's words thus: *If any man ſin, we have a comforter with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our ſins*—will make no good ſenſe; for when we have offended a perſon, we have need of an advocate with him, and not a comforter; one to make interceſſion for us, and not one to give conſolation]: I ſay, ſince this is clear and beyond diſpute, then, methinks, it ſhould be clear alſo, that in thoſe other four texts, where the name of paraclete is by the ſame writer given to the Holy Spirit, it ought to be render'd advocate likewiſe; or at leaſt by ſome other word of an equivalent ſignification. And this will appear yet clearer, when we conſider, that in one of theſe very texts where the Holy Ghoſt is called the paraclete, he is plainly repreſented under the notion of an advocate, and not of a comforter. The paſſage which I mean is John xvi. v. 7, 8, 9. which I ſhall explain particularly hereafter.

I will but add one thing more, and I leave this criticiſm; that in all Greek authors, as far as I can learn,

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παράκλητος hath always the ſignification of an advocate, or one that is called to aſſiſt and defend another, when he is to anſwer in a court of judicature; but is never uſed to ſignify a comforter. And this was the notion alſo that the Jews had of a paraclete; from whom we may reaſonably preſume that St. John had this word; as appears by that known proverb of theirs in the Talmud, *He that keeps one commandment, makes to himſelf a paraclete or an advocate; but he that commits one ſin, prepares to himſelf an accuſer.*

I ſhould not have been ſo long about a ſignification of a word, but that I think it is of ſome importance to us to have a right notion of the character which the Holy Ghoſt bears in the chriſtian diſpenſation, which you ſee is primarily that of an advocate: that being the proper ſignification of paraclete.

Taking the word now in this notion, it will ſignify to us in general ſuch a perſon as appears in the behalf of another: Such a perſon as defends another, when harm is intended againſt him: Such a perſon as intereſts himſelf in the affairs of another, either by intreating for him, or pleading his cauſe, or any ways managing his buſineſs: In a word, any one that is concerned for another as a patron or defender, ſollicitor or interceſſor, is a paraclete, or an advocate in the ſenſe that is here intended. And thus much of the notion or ſignification of a paraclete in general; which was my firſt point.

II. Well now, both our Saviour and the Holy Ghoſt, as the ſcriptures inform us, are thus our paracletes, our advocates, our patrons. The next queſtion therefore is, wherein the patronage or advocateſhip of the one differs from that of the other: In what ſenſe our

Saviour

Saviour is our advocate, and in what ſenſe the Holy Spirit is ſo.

Now if we look into the ſcriptures, we ſhall find that the difference of this office in theſe two perſons lies in this, *viz.* that our Saviour is our patron in heaven, and the Holy Spirit on earth. Our Saviour pleads our cauſe, and manages our affairs there; and the Holy Spirit, as his deputy and vicegerent doth it here. Our Saviour is our *advocate with the Father*, as St. John in the fore-cited place expreſly calls him; and the Holy Spirit is our advocate with the world. Our Saviour appears for us before God the Father, who is conſider'd as the great Lord of all; and the Holy Spirit appears for us and for our cauſe, againſt the world, and the devil, who are conſidered as our adverſaries or accuſers. They both have undertaken the defence of the ſame cauſe, and of the ſame perſons; but in theſe different reſpects.

1. To treat of this matter a little more diſtinctly, and firſt of all as to the advocateſhip of our Saviour.

The ſcriptures aſſure us, that our Saviour having given up himſelf as a ſacrifice for the ſins of the world, aſcended up into heaven, with this mind and intent, to appear before God for us; to preſent himſelf to his Father with that ſacrifice that had been offered up on the croſs on our behalf. As the high prieſts under the law, who were the great types of Chriſt, carried the blood of the ſacrifices that were ſlain, into the holy of holies, which was the repreſentative of heaven, and there preſented that blood before God, for the atonement of the people of Iſrael, for whom thoſe ſacrifices were ſlain; ſo, I ſay, did our Saviour, the true high prieſt of the world, upon his aſcenſion, preſent himſelf with his ſacrifice before God in the heavenly taber-

nacle, the holy of holies, not made with hands: and by the merits and virtue thereof did then begin (and will for ever continue it) to recommend all chriſtians, and all their concerns, and all their prayers to his heavenly Father, to intercede for them continually; and to render God favourable and propitious to them. This is that the apoſtle tells us, in the ninth of the Hebrews, ver. 24. *Chriſt is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true one; but into heaven itſelf, to appear in the preſence of God for us.* Thus alſo in the 7th chapter, ver. 24. *This man,* ſays he, meaning our Saviour, *becauſe he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable prieſthood, whereby he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him, ſeeing he evermore liveth to make interceſſion for them.* And thus laſtly, St. Paul in the eighth to the Romans, ver. 33. *Who,* ſays he, *ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who ſitteth at the right hand of God, to make interceſſion for us.*

It would take up too much time, to mention all thoſe places of ſcripture that relate to this advocateſhip of Chriſt, that we are now ſpeaking of. I ſhall only obſerve theſe following particulars concerning it, which may ſufficiently explain the nature of it to us. And I draw them all from the epiſtle to the Hebrews, where this point is largely treated of.

Firſt of all, That the advocateſhip of our Saviour only reſpects God; and it conſiſts in this, that he doth continually commend us and our affairs to his heavenly Father. *He is our advocate with the Father,* as St. John ſtiles him. 1 John ii. 1.

2dly, This advocateſhip of his, this interceſſion for us, is not in an humble ſupplicatory way, but with power and never-failing efficacy: So that whatever he repreſents to God as his deſire on our behalf, he certainly and effectually obtains for us.

3dly, This advocateſhip of Chriſt, and the efficacy of it, hath its foundation principally in the virtue and merits of that ſacrifice of himſelf, which he offered to God upon the croſs.

4thly, This advocateſhip of Chriſt, is the very ſame thing with his everlaſting prieſthood. Chriſt is therefore our high-prieſt, becauſe he is our patron with God, and continually intercedes with him on our behalf: This being the notion of a prieſt. Whether his offering up himſelf upon the croſs at Jeruſalem was an act of his prieſthood, or rather a conſecration to it, I will not now diſpute; but he became a high-prieſt after the order of Melchiſedeck, (which is the notion of his prieſthood that St. Paul all along purſues in his epiſtle to the Hebrews) when, after he was raiſed from the dead, he entered into the holy of holies, with that body of his that had been offered on the croſs, and ſat down on God's right hand, and became our patron, our advocate, our interceſſor with God for ever. At the ſame time indeed he became our king too; for then he had all power given him in heaven and in earth. But there is this difference between theſe two offices, that the one of them reſpects God, the other reſpects us. As our prieſt, he intercedes with God for us. As our king, he employs that power, which he hath received from God, in the governing us.

5thly and laſtly, Chriſt being thus our high-prieſt, our advocate with God, it follows, that all our pray-

ers to God ought to be put up in his name; ſince it is he that preſents them to God, it is he *through whom we have acceſs to the Father.* Eph. ii. 18. It is for his ſake, and upon his account, that they are at any time effectual. All the returns of our prayers, and all the bleſſings we receive from God's hands, are owing to the virtue of our Saviour's interceſſion and advocateſhip.

This is a full and plain account of our Saviour's advocateſhip. And by theſe particulars we may eaſily diſcern in how different a ſenſe the ſame office is given to the Holy Ghoſt; which is the other thing I come to ſpeak to.

2. The advocateſhip of the Holy Ghoſt, as I ſaid before, is not in heaven, but in the world: Doth not ſo much reſpect God, as the world, and the devil. His office is in the place of Chriſt to plead the cauſe of the church againſt its enemies; to be its patron and defender upon earth, and to manage the affairs of it ſo, that it may be victorious in this world over all its oppoſers. Under this notion of an advocate he is plainly repreſented in John xvi. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. a paſſage which I before referred to, but ſhall now explain more fully, becauſe it is an expreſs declaration of the advocateſhip of the Holy Spirit, and a clear account of the effects that ſhould enſue upon his deſcent on the apoſtles, as the patron of the chriſtian cauſe.—*Nevertheleſs I tell you the truth*, ſays our Lord to his diſciples, *It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter* [advocate] *will not come to you: But if I depart I will ſend him unto you, and when he is come he will reprove the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment. Of ſin, becauſe they believe not on me: Of righteouſneſs, becauſe I go to my*

Father, and ye ſee me no more: Of judgment, becauſe the prince of this world is judged. Now we ſhall have a very eaſy admiſſion into the ſenſe of this difficult paſſage, as it hath been uſually accounted, if we tranſlate παράκλητος, advocate, inſtead of comforter, and ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον, *convince* the world, as it is in the margin, inſtead of *reprove* the world, as our tranſlators have render'd it in the text. That there is good ground for the former alteration, appears not only from what hath been ſaid upon my firſt head, by way of criticiſm upon the word παράκλητος, but from the acts attributed to him in this place, for *reproving* or convincing *the world of ſin, and righteouſneſs, and judgment*, are the proper acts or offices of an advocate, but by no means of a comforter. And that we have ſufficient authority for the latter alteration is evident from a parallel place to this in the eighth chapter of this goſpel, ver. 46. τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει, or as ſome copies read it ἐλέγξει; *which of you convinceth me of ſin*, that is, which of you can ſhew me that I am guilty of ſin in teaching and in acting as I do? And beſides, tho' it may be good ſenſe to ſay that the Holy Ghoſt ſhall reprove the world of ſin, yet that term is not applicable to the two inſtances that follow; for it is not ſenſe to ſay, he ſhall reprove the world of righteouſneſs, or of judgment. Another paſſage there is in Tit. i. 9. which will ſhew us the full import of ἐλέγχειν in this place. There it is ſaid, that a biſhop ſhould be qualified not only to exhort, but alſo ἐλέγχειν τὰς ἀντιλέγοντας, to convince the gainſayers; to juſtify the things of Chriſt againſt all oppoſers.

This then certainly is the ſenſe of the word in this paſſage that we are upon, viz. that when the Holy Ghoſt, the advocate for Chriſtians, is come, he will

convince the world, he will juſtify the cauſe of Chriſt to the world, both in point of ſin, in point of righteouſneſs, and in point of judgment. The office of an advocate is to defend and make good the cauſe he hath undertaken. So the Holy Ghoſt, having, as an advocate eſpouſed the cauſe of Chriſt, he will maintain it, and juſtify it againſt all oppoſition.

As to the three particular inſtances in which he will juſtify it, we now come to give an account.

And here in the firſt place, let us conſider what this cauſe of Chriſt was that this advocate undertook to juſtify and defend. The cauſe of Jeſus Chriſt was plainly this: God ſent him into the world as the great prophet, who was to declare his will to mankind, in order to their ſalvation. But he was looked upon by the Jews, as a falſe prophet, as an impoſtor and deceiver: And inſtead of giving him that entertainment and reception that was due to him, they crucified and ſlew him. All which was brought to paſs by the contrivance and inſtigation of the devil, the prince of this world, who having long uſurped an empire and dominion over mankind, was loth to be thrown out of his poſſeſſion; which he was ſure to be, as ſoon as Jeſus ſhould be believed on in the world. And therefore by procuring that he ſhould be thus puniſhed as a malefactor, thought by this means to quaſh for ever all his pretences of being a prophet, and ſo to ſecure and eſtabliſh his own kingdom. This was the cauſe of Chriſt which the Holy Ghoſt came to vindicate.

Now the queſtion comes, What the Holy Ghoſt was to do in the vindication of it? In what inſtances he was to ſhew himſelf an advocate for this cauſe which he had eſpouſed? In anſwer to this queſtion, if we conſider our Saviour's caſe, we cannot even, according

ing to the principles of common reaſon, and the uſe and practice of mankind in theſe matters, deſire more to be done by him than theſe three things :

1ſt, To juſtify the truth of our Saviour's miſſion; to convince the world that Jeſus Chriſt was that great prophet which God had promiſed to ſend for the ſalvation of mankind, and that it was a great ſin in thoſe to whom he was ſent, that they did not believe in him.

2dly, To vindicate the perſonal innocence and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, to ſhew that he was really a virtuous, holy perſon, however he was thought of in the world; and at the ſame time to make out the equity and righteouſneſs of God in ſuffering him to be ſo evil treated.

3dly, To make out the juſtice or the judgment of God upon thoſe that were the authors of thoſe injuries that Chriſt ſuffer'd in the world : To ſhew that he was ſo far from countenancing or abetting the wicked conſpiracy againſt Jeſus, that he gave a manifeſt evidence of his juſtice by retaliating upon the principal agent and contriver of it, what he thought to have done to Jeſus : That is, deſtroying and caſting him out of all that power and dominion which he had hitherto poſſeſſed in the world.

Theſe three things, I ſay, in common reaſon, and according to the courſe of proceedings among men in like caſes, were the principal points which it concerned the Holy Ghoſt, as an advocate, to vindicate the cauſe of Chriſt in. And theſe are the very things which our Saviour ſaid he ſhould do, when he came into the world; and accordingly when he came he did them effectually.

Firſt of all, he *convinced the world of ſin, becauſe they believed not in Jeſus Chriſt*, (ver. 9.) viz. He gave a proof beyond all exception and contradiction that Jeſus

Chriſt was the great prophet ſent from God; and that the Jews who did not receive him were guilty of a very great ſin; and ſtill a greater in that they crucified him. For let this only be conſidered, that the Jews had now been four hundred years without the Holy Spirit; ſo long, a leaſt, had the gifts of prophecy, and all other miraculous powers been abſent from them; and all this time they were expecting the Meſſiah. Now certainly the Holy Ghoſt being thus viſibly ſent down upon the diſciples of Chriſt, after ſo long an abſence, and manifeſting himſelf to their eyes, to their ears, to all their ſenſes in ſo illuſtrious a manner, by the mighty works that he wrought, and the wonderful gifts that he beſtowed, could not but be an argument beyond all contradiction, that Jeſus was from God, and conſequently that the Jews, in not believing on him, were guilty of a very great ſin. For theſe being things which it was not poſſible ſhould be brought about by human arts or devices, nor by the power of the devil, becauſe they evidently tended to the deſtruction of his kingdom, muſt neceſſarily be from God; and conſequently Jeſus Chriſt was owned by him as a true prophet, which was a plain and ſufficient conviction of the ſin of the Jews in rejecting him.

Secondly, He convinced the world of righteouſneſs, *Becauſe*, ſays our Saviour, *I go to my Father, and ye ſee me no more* (ver. 10.) And here the point is, what righteouſneſs that was that the advocate ſhould convince the world of: Certainly it muſt either be Chriſt's righteouſneſs, or God's righteouſneſs. The ſenſe is good either way; and the reaſon here annexed is as applicable to the one ſenſe, as to the other.

[1.] The Holy Ghoſt coming down was a demonſtration of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, viz. that he was in his own perſon very innocent, no ways a criminal as the

the Jews had accounted him, and accordingly, in pursuance thereof, had condemned him. For had he been a wicked, flagitious person, God could never have owned him for his Son, and exalted him to that high power and dignity in heaven and in earth, that it was apparent and evident he was exalted to, by his having power to send down the Holy Ghost, and by him to atchieve such wonderful things as proclaimed Jesus Christ to all the world to be the very Son of God, and that he was gone to his Father.

[2.] Again, the holy Spirit's coming down was likewise a means to convince the world of righteousness with respect to God; that is to say, to take off the objection that might have been made against the equity of God's dealing with Jesus Christ, to suffer him, who was so innocent a person, to fall into such hard circumstances, and undergo such unheard-of sufferings and persecutions. For by his appearing with such mighty signs and wonders for the maintenance and justification of the cause of Christ, he shewed clearly to all the world, that God had made a sufficient compensation to our Lord Jesus for all that he underwent, having exalted him to his own right-hand, and for the suffering of death made him *both Lord and Christ*, (Acts ii. 36.) *and given him a name above every name, so that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to him, both of things in heaven and things in earth*, as the apostle speaks, *Phil.* ii. 9, 10, 11.

But [3dly] There is another point mentioned with reference to which the Holy Ghost should convince the world, and that is in point of judgment. The Advocate *when he cometh shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*, (ver. 11.) By judgment, here is plainly meant God's punitive justice.

The devil, or prince of the world, had by his inſtruments, as he thought, effectually brought deſtruction upon Jeſus Chriſt, and put an end to his pretences of being the Meſſiah that was to rule the world. It therefore concerned the juſtice of God's providence to retaliate upon the devil this miſchief which he had wrought; and by ſending down the Holy Ghoſt, the Advocate, he effectually did it; for by this means the devil was brought to ſuffer that judgment and condemnation which he meant to have brought upon our Saviour. He meant to deſtroy Jeſus Chriſt: But now *he that had the power of death, the devil* himſelf, was deſtroyed, *Heb.* ii. 14. And this our Lord himſelf foretold, when he firſt ſent out his diſciples by the power of the Spirit to preach the goſpel; *I beheld Satan*, ſays he, *as lightning fall from heaven*, Luke x. 18. And indeed he fell unexpectedly from all that power and authority which he had ſo long exerciſed among the nations. For no ſooner did the Holy Ghoſt come upon the diſciples, but they converted mankind, where-ever they came, from the ſlavery of the devil, to the liberty of the ſons of God. The effects of which, with reference to our purpoſe, were two:

[1.] All the oracles which had been ſo frequent, and made ſo great a noiſe in all parts of the world, were ſtruck dumb: And this we have not only from the authority of the primitive chriſtian fathers, who made uſe of this as a great argument (and indeed it was ſo) for the truth of chriſtianity; but alſo from the acknowledgment of the pagans themſelves. *Porphyry* confeſſes that 'after the time that the religion of Jeſus was 'preached in the world, they had no benefit by their 'oracles, or by their ſacrifices, but they ſeemed to be 'forſaken by their Gods.' And Plutarch hath left us

a book

a book upon record of the ceasing of the oracles in all places; of which he can give no account; but we christians can.

[2.] The other effect was the throwing out idolatry in all places, where-ever the christian religion was entertained. The devil, in all pagan countries before our Saviour's time, had his temples, sacrifices, mysteries, and all the instances of divine worship paid unto him. And indeed he might, in a proper sense enough, at that time be stiled *the god of this world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. for all mankind, but the Jews, did pay him homage. But upon the coming of the advocate after our Saviour's ascension, and the mighty evidence that he gave of the truth of the christian religion for near three hundred years together, all those idolatries wore off; and the world was no longer subject to the prince of darkness, but became worshippers of the only true God, *and of Jesus Christ whom he had sent.* The heathenish temples were demolished, their sacrifices turned out of doors, their idols broken down, and where-ever christianity prevailed *there were no other Gods but one:* And it did prevail over all the Roman empire, which was then the most considerable part of the known world. And, God be thanked, it doth prevail at this day, and ever will do so through the power of the Blessed Spirit, its patron and defender, who manages the affairs of it, and of every particular christian so, that at length all the true members of the church may attain to that eternal inheritance that Christ purchased for them.

Having shewed then the different nature and effects of the advocateship of Jesus Christ in heaven, and that of the Blessed Spirit upon earth; I now proceed to my third and last general head, which is, to enquire into the

the ſeveral acts, or inſtances, or expreſſions of this advocateſhip of the Holy Ghoſt, (by which he began to adminiſter this office for the church, and by which he continues ſtill to do it, and will do ſo to the end of the world) and to ſhew which of them were peculiar to the times of the apoſtles, and which of them are common to all the times and ages of chriſtianity.

III. It is very eaſy to gather from what hath been ſaid, that the Holy Ghoſt was a patron or advocate for the chriſtian cauſe in the times of the apoſtles, in a way quite different from that in ſucceeding ages; for the reaſon is obvious: The world was then to be convinced of ſin, righteouſneſs, and judgment: Now the world is convinced of all theſe in the manner I have before deſcribed. The goſpel was then to be effectually preached and propagated among unbelievers, and idolatrous nations: Now the goſpel is preached, and churches are planted. Chriſtianity was then to meet with a world of oppoſition: Now it is entertained as the public religion of many kingdoms and nations. There was then all ſorts of divine evidence to be given for the truth and credibility of it, in order for the converſion of the world to it: But now we enjoying the benefits of thoſe miraculous evidences, and having (beſides) other abundant proofs of the truth of chriſtianity, (which they in that age had not) there is no need that thoſe miracles ſhould be continued or repeated.

This difference of the times and ſtates of things, makes the adminiſtration of the Holy Ghoſt's office in thoſe times to be different alſo from what it is in theſe. Though yet he is ſtill as much the advocate for Chriſt, and the church, as he was at firſt: And doth and will abide

abide with it for ever, as our Saviour promiſed in my text.

1. Well as to thoſe inſtances of the Holy Ghoſt's advocateſhip, which were peculiar to the apoſtles and their times, the ſcripture mentions theſe four following:

Firſt of all, the Holy Ghoſt ſhewed himſelf an advocate for the chriſtians, in that he ſpoke in them and for them to kings and governors, before whom they were convened for the cauſe of Chriſt: Beſtowing upon them likewiſe an extraordinary boldneſs and preſence of mind in preaching the goſpel. This aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit we find our Saviour promiſed to his diſciples when he gave them their firſt commiſſion to preach: *Ye ſhall be brought*, ſays he to them, *before governors and kings for my name's ſake, for a teſtimony to them, and the Gentiles*, Mat. x. 18. *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what ye ſhall ſpeak, for it ſhall be given you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak*, ver. 19. *For it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of your Father which ſpeaketh in you*, ver. 20. And this promiſe we find was abundantly made good in St. Peter and St. Stephen, and others of the firſt martyrs. Now though I doubt not but God will ſufficiently aſſiſt all pious perſons in theſe days, when they are called out to bear teſtimony to the cauſe of Chriſt; yet, I much doubt, whether in any caſe they are to expect the ſame inſpiration that is here promiſed the apoſtles; ſo that words ſhall be put into their mouths when they preach, or when they pray, or when they make any other diſcourſe, without uſing the common means of meditation, and the like.

Secondly, Another inſtance of the Holy Ghoſt's advocateſhip for the apoſtles, was the bringing all things to their remembrance whatever Chriſt had ſaid to them;

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ſo that no paſſage of our Saviour's diſcourſes to them was forgot by them, but was ready at hand in their memories when there was occaſion for it. This our Saviour himſelf inſtanceth in as one of the things that the Advocate when he came ſhould do for them: As we have it in the 26th verſe of this chapter, *Theſe things*, ſaith he, *have I ſpoken unto you, being yet preſent with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my name, he ſhall bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you*, John xiv. 25, 26. Now it is plain, beyond all contradiction, that this muſt be ſpoken to the apoſtles only, who heard what he had ſaid, and could not poſſibly relate to any that came after them.

Thirdly, The Holy Ghoſt did not only bring all things to their remembrance, but furniſhed them with a power of judging unerringly as to matters of faith. So that they ſhould not only remember the doctrine of our Saviour, but rightly underſtand it; and be able, without any miſtake, to propoſe it to others. (And certainly this was a privilege which no particular man, and no particular church, ſince the apoſtles time, could with any reaſon pretend to.) Every chriſtian truth that was neceſſary or expedient to be known in the church, the apoſtles were made acquainted with, and could certainly and infallibly diſtinguiſh it from what was error: This is another effect which is attributed to the advocate when he ſhould come; thus in the forementioned verſe, *when the Advocate ſhall come, he ſhall teach you all things:* And again, in the 16th chapter of this goſpel, ver. 13. *when the Spirit of truth is come, he ſhall guide you into all truth.*

Now by virtue of thoſe three before-named powers which were conferred by the Advocate upon the apoſtles, they

they were not only furniſhed completely for the preaching of the goſpel, but alſo for the putting it into writing, (that it might be faithfully and entirely tranſmitted to all ſucceeding times) or, at leaſt, taking care that others ſhould do it for them. And accordingly to theſe effects of the Holy Spirit's advocateſhip, to this extraordinary aſſiſtance that went along with the apoſtles, we owe all the books of the New-teſtament. Which now are, and muſt for ever be, the rule and ſtandard of our faith.

Fourthly and laſtly, The Holy Ghoſt appeared as an advocate for the chriſtian cauſe, in furniſhing the apoſtles, and other firſt converts to chriſtianity, with ſuch extraordinary miraculous powers, as could not fail to procure credit to their doctrine and preaching; and ſpeedily to bring off the world from judaiſm and heatheniſm to the belief of Jeſus Chriſt, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition that was made thereto by the powers of the world, and kingdom of darkneſs. We all know what a divine power our Saviour was acted with, and what aſtoniſhing works he wrought among the Jews for the proving himſelf to be ſent from God; yet, ſays he, *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, he ſhall do alſo; and greater works than theſe ſhall he do, becauſe I go to my Father.* And this promiſe of his he made good to a tittle after his aſcenſion into heaven, not only to the apoſtles, but to all thoſe believers on whom they laid their hands, as we have abundant evidence from ſeveral places in the New-teſtament. And here indeed, in theſe extraordinary manifeſtations of himſelf for the propagation of the chriſtian doctrine, did the Holy Spirit moſt viſibly and illuſtriouſly ſhew himſelf a patron of the cauſe of Chriſt.

To reckon up the ſeveral powers of this nature that were beſtowed upon the firſt chriſtians, will be a hard taſk at this diſtance of time. Nine of them St. Paul has joined together in one text: *To one*, ſays he, *is given the word of wiſdom by the Spirit; to another the word of knowledge by the ſame Spirit; to another faith by the ſame Spirit*, 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9. (that is, ſuch faith as our Saviour ſpeaks of, when he ſays, *If ye have faith as a grain of muſtard-ſeed, ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remove; and nothing ſhall be impoſſible to you*, Mat. xvii. 20.) *To another the gifts of healing by the ſame Spirit*, (1 Cor. xii. 9.) *To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy*, or foretelling things to come; *to another diſcerning of ſpirits*, or knowing people's hearts; *to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues*, (ver. 10.) *All theſe*, ſaith he, *worketh that one and the ſelf ſame Spirit, dividing to every man ſeverally as he will*, ver. 11. Theſe were the gifts which our Lord Jeſus, *when he aſcended up on high, received for men*, Pſal. lxviii. 18. Theſe were the gifts that his vicegerent, and our advocate upon earth, beſtowed upon the apoſtles, and they to others, both clergy and laity, both men and women, ſo long as there was occaſion for them.

What now was the reſult; what was the ſucceſs of theſe ſtrange things? Why, it is notorious to all the world; a religion that had nothing of any external charms in it; a religion, whoſe principal article was to believe in a crucified Saviour; and the principal reward of owning it was, in this world, only a crown of martyrdom; a religion that was preached only by poor and contemptible perſons, men of no learning, no education; a religion that was oppoſed with the greateſt malice and violence imaginable, and againſt which the whole

whole power of the empire did ſet itſelf, endeavouring by all manner of arts, all manner of cruelties, to extirpate it out of the world; yet this religion, thro' the uncontroulable power of the Spirit, broke thro' all oppoſition, bore down all before it, ſpread like lightning through all places, and gained entertainment where-ever it came, till, at laſt, it became the religion of the empire, and kings and princes were nurſing fathers to it.

Thus powerful an advocate did the Holy Ghoſt ſhew himſelf for the chriſtian cauſe; and thus effectually did he make good what our Saviour had foretold of him, that he ſhould convince the world of ſin, of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.

2. But all this while we do not deny, nay we earneſtly contend, that the Holy Ghoſt is ſtill with us, as well as he was with the apoſtles. He ſtill is the church's advocate, now that chriſtianity is planted, and there is no need of thoſe extraordinary aſſiſtances we before ſpoke of: Preſent ſtill he is with his church, and ever will be, to all purpoſes that are needful, either for the glory of God, or the preſervation of the church, or the ſalvation of any man's ſoul.

Now, tho' I dare not be nice and particular in giving an account of this matter, yet theſe four things I dare ſay we may always expect and promiſe to ourſelves from him, even to the end of the world. I ſhall be very brief in ſpeaking to them.

Firſt of all, We may be ſure that as by his power and influence the church of Chriſt was firſt effectually planted in the world; ſo he will always take care that the church built upon the foundation of Chriſt and his apoſtles, ſhall in all times and ages be continued and preſerved: And in order to that, that there ſhall be always

ways a ſucceſſion of paſtors and miniſters in the church, who ſhall always teach all neceſſary fundamental truths, and be furniſhed with ſufficient powers and abilities for the diſcharge of their function, *viz.* for the begetting ſouls to Jeſus Chriſt; and by the adminiſtration of the word and ſacraments, putting them into a way of obtaining everlaſting ſalvation. Leſs than this we cannot ſuppoſe to be contained in theſe promiſes of Chriſt, *that the gates of hell ſhall never prevail againſt his church*, Mat. xvi. 18. and *that he*, by his Spirit, *will be with his apoſtles* and their ſucceſſors *to the end of the world*, chap. xxviii. 20. But then it is to be remember'd always, that it doth not follow from hence, either that any particular church is ſecure from error, or from other great failings; or that any particular church ſhall always continue to be a church. Becauſe a particular church, or a particular nation, may ſo reject the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and by their grievous and often repeated trangreſſions ſo affront God, as to provoke him at laſt to give them up, and *to remove their candleſtick from them*, as St. John expreſſes it, *Rev.* ii. 5. The promiſe of the perpetual preſence or advocateſhip of the Holy Spirit is only made to the church of Chriſt in general, not to any particular church or member of that body; and it is only ſo made to the church in general, as to import that that church ſhall never fail from the earth; but not at all that it ſhall never fall into errors or corruptions.

Secondly, As the Holy Ghoſt, for making good the promiſes of Chriſt, will take care that there ſhall always be a church; (viz. ſeveral ſocieties of men agreeing in the common faith under their lawful paſtors, wherein ſo much chriſtian truth ſhall be taught as is neceſſary to ſalvation) ſo the ſame Spirit will always take

take care to be present in the ordinances and administrations of the church, both for the enlightening the understandings of men to receive and embrace all necessary truths, and inclining their wills to practise accordingly. I dare not say of any sort of men in the world that have the essentials of christianity among them, but that the Holy Spirit is always at hand, by his inward power and virtue, to accompany the outward means which God hath been pleased to bestow or continue amongst them.

Thirdly, I say this further; the Holy Spirit of God never did, nor ever will fail to direct and govern the lives and actions of all believers that mean honestly, and heartily devote themselves to the service of Jesus Christ. He will not fail to inspire their minds with good thoughts, to give them grace and strength to resist the temptations of the devil; to assist them in their prayers and devotions; and *whereas they know not what they should pray for as they ought, to make intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26. (for which reason chiefly, as some learned men have conceived, he hath the name of Paraclete or Advocate given him in scripture, namely, as the intercessor for the saints; tho' I am apt to think, with St. Chrysostom, that this text is rather to be understood of the extraordinary gifts of prayer in the first ages:) And to preserve them from all dangerous and destructive errors, to furnish them with sufficient powers to mortify and overcome all their evil habits and corrupt affections; and finally, if they be compliant with his holy motions, to bring them all at last to the kingdom of heaven. I do not say that they shall be secured against all errors, and against all sins; but if they be persons of probity and integrity, such as sincerely desire to know

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their Maſter's will, and to do it, they ſhall for ever be kept from all damning errors, and for ever be ſecured from ſuch ſnares and temptations to evil practices, as, if they were expoſed to, and left to themſelves, they could not avoid falling under them.

But fourthly and laſtly, While I am talking of the ordinary grace of God, and the ordinary inſtances of the Holy Ghoſt's advocateſhip in the world; yet I would not exclude out of that account even the extraordinary communications of God's grace and ſpirit, when an extraordinary occaſion offers itſelf. When in our days an unuſual caſe happens, that is to ſay, when a particular church, or a particular perſon, is put under ſuch difficulties, or trials, or temptations, that God Almighty ſees they cannot be got over without a greater aſſiſtance of his divine power than is ordinarily beſtowed; in ſuch a caſe as this, I ſay, God will beſtow all the aſſiſtance that is needful: And that aſſiſtance of the Spirit, though it be more than is uſual, yet, in our caſe, comes under the notion of ordinary grace, or the ordinary acts of the Spirit's advocateſhip. Our Lord Jeſus hath purchaſed the Holy Spirit for his diſciples, not only for thoſe of one age, but for all his followers to the world's end; and at the ſame time that he promiſed to ſend the Holy Ghoſt for the advocate, he promiſed that he ſhould *abide with us for ever*, as my text hath it. There were indeed greater occaſions of his appearing illuſtriouſly, viſibly, and miraculouſly at the beginning of chriſtianity, than there can be now. But if the ſame occaſions could happen again, he would, without doubt, appear ſuitably to thoſe occaſions; for his power is not ſhortened; and we may be certain that he will never leave us nor forſake us, unleſs we firſt leave and forſake him. In the mean time let us

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not be dismayed at any thing; let us not doubt of his constant support and assistance. Though he do not inspire us to work miracles, or speak languages; yet he will for ever inspire us both to believe aright, and to practise aright, if we use our understandings as we ought to do, and do not wilfully depart from the known rules of our duty. And if ever it please God to expose us to extraordinary temptations, his Spirit will then extraordinarily assist us, and we shall as certainly overcome them, as if we had been acted in the same way that the apostles and primitive christians were.

I have been the more careful in distinguishing between the extraordinary and ordinary instances of the Holy Ghost's advocateship in the world; because the not attending duly to it hath brought abundance of fanaticism, and enthusiasm, and other mischiefs into the church of Christ. Whilst we are reading the New-testament, and do often there meet with such surprising things about the gifts and effects of the Holy Spirit, and do not distinguish between those that were proper and peculiar to the apostolic age, and those that were to be continued to the church for ever after, it is hardly avoidable but we must needs run into a great many mistakes; and such mistakes as have by experience been found very prejudicial both to the peace of Christendom, and the salvation of mens souls.

For instance, I pray what is it that hath made so many quakers and gifted brethren amongst us, but the misinterpreting and misapplying those texts which speak of the gifts of the Spirit, which they so understand as to make no distinction between the times then and the times now? They read, for instance, a prophecy in Joel, that when *the last days should come, God would pour his Spirit upon all flesh, and their young men should see visions,*

ſions, and their old men dream dreams, Joel ii. 28. Acts ii. 17. And again, that in thoſe days (as the prophet Jeremy hath it) *every man ſhall no more teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, know the Lord; for they ſhall all know me from the leaſt of them unto the greateſt of them, ſaith the Lord*, Jer. xxxi. 34. And accordingly they find the matter of fact true, for St. John ſpeaks to all the chriſtians to whom he writes in theſe terms: *The anointing*, ſays he, *which ye have received abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but the ſame anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth*, 1 John ii. 27. What now do they collect from theſe paſſages? Why they conclude that in theſe days, which are the laſt days, the Spirit of God is poured upon all fleſh: And every one hath a right to expect immediate impulſes and revelations as to what he is to believe and to practiſe. That by this aſſiſtance of the Spirit every brother may underſtand the myſteries of the holy ſcriptures, without the troubleſome way of ſtudying human learning; nay, and may take upon himſelf the paſtoral office, and become a guide and teacher of others, without any warrant from human authority, merely upon the impulſe of the Spirit of God. Theſe are the conſequences that have been drawn from theſe and ſuch texts of ſcripture. And ſo far have they been promoted and improved by ſeveral among us, that reaſon and prudence, and all acquired learning, are rather accounted by them hindrances to the work of God's church, than any ways contributing to the promoting of it. Nay, they are arrived to a pitch above the ſcriptures themſelves, which they look upon as a dead letter in compariſon of the light within them, the witneſs, the anointing which they have received from above;

above; which is the only meaſure with them of truth and falſhood, and of good and evil.

I cannot deny but theſe enthuſiaſtic people, that talk at this rate, have ſome colour for this their notion from the letter of ſeveral paſſages in the Old and New-teſtament. But then, I ſay, that colour would quite vaniſh, if they would but take care to diſtinguiſh between the effects of the Spirit that belonged to the converting of the world, and thoſe which were to be his conſtant permanent operations among ſuch as were already chriſtians. There is no one will deny, but the apoſtles, and thoſe in their times, had theſe inſpirations, theſe revelations they ſpeak of; and the texts that they produce, are ſome of them plain promiſes and predictions of them, and ſome of them plain proofs that thoſe promiſes were made good. They did ſee viſions, and were endued with extraordinary talents of wiſdom and knowledge without human methods, and might expect particular impulſes from the Holy Ghoſt upon every occaſion that preſented itſelf, where they wanted either light or direction: And all this was indeed little enough for the diſcharge of that great work they had upon their hands, viz. the bringing over the world from judaiſm and heatheniſm to chriſtianity. But that being once done, and the goſpel of Chriſt, and all things pertaining to it, being plainly left in writing by the apoſtles or apoſtolical men; as there would from henceforward be no need of thoſe aſſiſtances of the Spirit; ſo it would be a vain thing to expect them. We are not to deſire theſe immediate revelations, nor to expect that God ſhould vouchſafe them to us if we prayed for them. God hath declared all his will, that is neceſſary for us to know, by our Saviour and his apoſtles: And the rules which they have given us, together with our own

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natural light and reaſon, and the other outward means and helps of inſtruction which are every day at hand among us, are ſufficient, abundantly ſufficient, to guide and direct us, both as to belief and practice, through all the caſes and emergencies that can ordinarily happen to us. And in extraordinary caſes God will take care, ſome way or other, that we ſhall not be at a loſs. And therefore, to pretend to the Spirit now-a-days, either for preaching, or praying, or propheſying, or denouncing God's judgments, or for any other thing, in ſuch a way as implies immediate inſpiration; or to ſet up a light within us, contrary to the light of reaſon, or different from the light of ſcripture without us; I ſay, to do this is ſuch a piece of folly and freakiſhneſs, that if all of us ſhould incline this way, it would preſently render mankind fitter for a Bethlehem, or an hoſpital of lunaticks, than to live in free ſociety.

But I ſhall not purſue this point, or any other, further. Let us heartily acquieſce in that light and aſſiſtance which it hath pleaſed God to beſtow upon us by means of his Holy Spirit. And let us always moſt readily and chearfully yield obedience to all his motions, and pray conſtantly for his directions and aſſiſtance; devoting ourſelves entirely to the ſervice of God, in thoſe ways which his bleſſed Son hath laid before us in the goſpel.

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DISCOURSE III.

Of grieving the Spirit. Of the ſealing of the Spirit. Of the different notions of Redemption in Holy Scripture.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

EPH. IV. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed to the day of redemption.

FOR the right underſtanding of what is meant by *grieving the Holy Spirit*, it is fit that we carefully diſtinguiſh between theſe four expreſſions, *viz. reſiſting the Spirit*; *blaſpheming the Spirit*; *quenching the Spirit*; and *grieving the Spirit*. All theſe are ſcripture expreſſions, and denote ſome affront put upon the Holy Ghoſt, ſome ſin committed againſt him. But yet they have every one of them different ſignifications, and are uſed to quite different purpoſes, though common readers make no

diſtinction between them. I will give you a ſhort account of each of them, the rather, becauſe hereby we may rectify ſome popular miſtakes in theſe matters.

1. And firſt as to that phraſe of reſiſting the Spirit, ſo far as we can judge of the ſenſe of it by the context, it is ſpoke with reſpect to thoſe who wickedly oppoſe the truth of God, when it is declared to them. They are ſaid to reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt, who obſtinately ſtand out againſt thoſe means that the Spirit of God makes uſe of for the converting them to the true religion. Thus St. Stephen, in the ſeventh of the Acts, ver. 51. tells the unbelieving Jews, *Ye ſtiff-necked*, ſays he, *and uncircumciſed in heart and ears, ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt; as your fathers did, ſo do ye.* How was it now that their fathers reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt? Why that we may learn from what follows: They perſecuted and ſlew the prophets whom God ſent to them from time to time to declare his will to them. And how was it that they, the children, viz. the preſent generation, reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt? Why in that, notwithſtanding the powerful miracles that Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles wrought among them by the Spirit, they ſtill continued infidels and oppoſers of the goſpel: This was their *reſiſting the Spirit:* From whence we may gather, that it is not every diſobedience or non-compliance with a good motion that is made in our ſouls, that may be called a *reſiſting of the Spirit:* But it muſt be a wilful, perverſe, obſtinate oppoſing of God's truth that doth deſerve that name.

2. In the ſecond place, as for blaſpheming or ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt, that is a degree higher than this, for it implies not only the not being convinced by the miracles that were wrought for the proof of Chriſt's religion; but further, by ſlandering or calumniating

niating the Spirit by which they were wrought, saying, that he was not the Spirit of God, but *Beelzebub the prince of the devils*, Mark iii. 22. This was the sin of the pharisees, and it appears so heinous in the eyes of our Saviour, that he declares, that whosoever *shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation, because they said he hath an unclean spirit*, Mark iii. 29, 30. So that without doubt that famous sin, which we call the sin against the Holy Ghost, and which is looked upon as unpardonable, is nothing else but our attributing the miracles of Christ to the power of the devil. From whence we may judge whether any of those people among us, who are apt to fancy they have committed that sin, can possibly be guilty of it.

3. As to the phrase of *quenching the Spirit*, we meet with it among the precepts and advices which St. Paul gives to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. v. 19. *Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophecyings.* It is plain he speaks this of those who were already christians; but yet not with respect to the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit of God, which all christians were partakers of, but with respect to the extraordinary miraculous effusions of the Spirit, which were given to some christians in those days. The meaning of the precept is, that they who had these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit conferred upon them, should be very careful that they did not lose them, that they did not die in them. He useth this term of quenching, because the Holy Spirit is in scripture called a fire; and when he came upon the apostles, he came in the likeness of fire. And accordingly, as he here talks of *quenching the Spirit*, so he elsewhere speaks of *stirring up the Spirit*, 2 Tim. i. 6. alluding in both expressions to the notion of fire: Cer-

tain it is, as a fire muſt be ſtirred up and recruited, otherwiſe it will in a little time be extinguiſhed, ſo it was with thoſe extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in thoſe days. The men that had them were concerned to be wonderfully careful in the exerciſe of them; never to let them lie idle and unemployed in their hands; nor to make uſe of them to any ſelfiſh worldly purpoſe. It concerned them likewiſe to be frequent in prayer; to be ſtrict and ſevere in their lives; to mind the cauſe of God above all things, otherwiſe God would withdraw thoſe aſſiſtances of the Spirit from them, the Spirit would perfectly be extinguiſhed in them, and they wholly loſe the power of working miracles, and ſpeaking languages, which before they were endowed with. This is the meaning of *quenching the Spirit*; which being ſo, we cannot but take notice how impertinently this phraſe is uſed by a great many in our days. A man that addreſſes himſelf to God in a form of prayer, and doth not uſe his extemporary faculty, is, by ſome ſort of people among us, ſaid to *quench the Spirit*. But certainly this is quite wide of the expreſſion as St. Paul uſed it; unleſs we could make it appear, that every one who talks to God in a ſudden extemporary way, without premeditation, was ſupernaturally and immediately inſpired from heaven ſo to do, and was as much acted by the Divine Spirit as the apoſtles were in their miraculous performances; which, for my part, I think it a hard matter to believe of any pretenders to inſpiration among us.

4. As for the laſt phraſe, that of *grieving the Spirit*, which we here meet with in my text, I come now in the laſt place to conſider it. And I conceive that this phraſe is not uſed with reſpect to thoſe who are infidels, as the terms of *reſiſting the Spirit*, *and blaſpheming the Spirit*,

Spirit, are uſed; nor with reſpect to the miraculous extraordinary effects, which were viſible in many places and perſons in the firſt times of chriſtianity; which the term of *quenching the Spirit* doth refer to; but it is a precept given to thoſe who have already taken the profeſſion of chriſtianity upon themſelves; and it is ſpoken with reſpect to the ſanctifying gifts and graces of the Spirit, *viz.* thoſe communications of the Spirit which were not peculiar to the firſt times, but common to all believers to the world's end. The Spirit of God is here conſidered as a gueſt that hath taken up his lodging in our hearts; at leaſt, as one that deſires to be our gueſt; as having acquired a right and title to us, by virtue of the contract and covenant we made with God in our baptiſm, and undertaking the vows of chriſtianity. And under this notion of a gueſt or lodger we are bound not to grieve him, not to afflict him, or make him ſad (for ſo the original μὴ λυπεῖτε ſignifies) *Ne contriſtate Spiritum*, ſays the vulgar Latin very properly. That is, to be careful that we give him no offence, not to do any thing that ſhall diſpleaſe him, or by any unkind uſage of ours make him weary of his habitation, and give him occaſion to remove from us. His meaning is for ever-more to dwell with us; as indeed he is the very principle of the life of a chriſtian, and we cannot live as chriſtians without him. It is not more neceſſary to the conſtituting of a man, that a human ſoul inhabit in a human body, than it is to the being a true chriſtian, that the Holy Spirit of God inhabit in the ſoul and body of the man. It is true, the Holy Spirit of God doth not dwell actually in all who profeſs chriſtianity: but then it is true, that all who profeſs chriſtianity, are not true chriſtians. But this is certain, that it is every profeſſor's own fault, that

the Spirit doth not dwell within him. It is certain, that he is ready and willing ſo to do, and for this purpoſe, ſo long as men have not ſinned to ſuch a degree that God thinks fit to give them over to hardneſs of heart, he fails not, as there is opportunity, to ſuggeſt good motions to their ſouls. As he affords them the outward means of ſalvation, the word and ſacraments, ſo he accompanies thoſe outwards means with his inward grace and influence. And if they themſelves do not prevent his operations in them, he will effectually at laſt, by the deſtruction of their ſins, work himſelf a room and place in their hearts; and lodge there for ever, if they do not diſlodge him. And indeed this is the very whole deſign of the goſpel of Chriſt, to unite us to himſelf by the means of the Holy Spirit; to plant in us a new nature; to poſſeſs us with a principle of life, higher and more divine than that which we received from our parents. By being called to chriſtianity, we are called to be the perpetual receptacles and temples of the divinity. This honour and dignity, by our undertaking the chriſtian profeſſion, we are deſigned for; and whoſoever doth his part towards it, is actually made partaker of it. And no man can pretend to any benefit by his chriſtianity, in whom the Spirit of God doth not thus dwell. For this we have abundant evidence all along from what our Saviour and his apoſtles taught us. This is the meaning of all thoſe places that ſet forth the union between Chriſt and his church, making him to be the head, and chriſtians the members. This is that which our Saviour ſaith in the xvth of St. John, ver. 5, 6. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is caſt out as*

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a withered branch. There is the same relation between Christ and christians, that there is between the vine and the branches: The same necessity of communication of vital influences from the root to the branch in the one, as in the other: Which communication of influences is made by the Holy Spirit of God, derived from Christ, and diffusing himself into every particular member of the whole body of christians. Hence it is christians are so frequently called the temples of the Holy Ghost. *Know ye not*, says St. Paul, *that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. And again; *Know ye not that your Bodies are the members of Christ?* 1 Cor. vi. 15. Which he explains presently after thus; *Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you; which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* ver. 19. And the same St. Paul in the viiith to the Romans, ver. 9, 10, 11, &c. lays the foundation of our relation to Christ, and our hopes of eternal life, in this very thing, viz. the Spirit of God his dwelling in us; as may be there seen more at large.

This then being the privilege of all christians, that by their being consecrated to Christ, they have a right to the continual presence of the Holy Ghost in their souls; or if you will, God hath so great a right and property in them, that he sends down his Holy Spirit to take possession of them, in order to the securing and sealing them for his own in the other world; we may easily from hence gather what it is *to grieve the Holy Spirit*, (which is the thing we are now enquiring into) viz. We then grieve him, when, being already christians in profession, we either will not vouchsafe

him a lodging in our hearts, which he doth desire; and in order to the obtaining it, makes frequent applications to our souls by his holy motions: Or when we have already given him entertainment, we carry ourselves so unbecomingly towards him, as to tempt him to forsake us. We then *grieve the Holy Spirit*, when, having taken upon ourselves the covenant of baptism, and thereby consecrated and consigned ourselves to God, we either refuse to admit the Spirit to take possession of us, or having admitted him, do not shew that respect, nor observe that decency, nor express that kindness that is due to so worthy a guest; but by our rude and unmannerly and ill-natured behaviour towards him, put such affronts upon him, as highly provoke him to quit his habitation.

Having thus explained the meaning of the precept, and shewn you the foundation upon which it is built; I cannot but make a reflection or two upon what hath been said, before I pass any further.

1. And first, How ought the consideration of this to affect us! What are we, poor creatures, that God should deign to take up his habitation in our souls! And yet we see he is pleased to do so. God doth more really inhabit in every pious soul, and vouchsafe his presence there, than he doth in any temples or churches dedicated to his service. Oh, what a mighty honour and happiness is hereby conferred upon our natures! The highest angels of heaven cannot boast of greater privileges than we enjoy. Oh, what an argument is here to make us infinitely careful, and sollicitous, and jealous over ourselves! What a shame and disdain should the sense of this infuse in us, to mingle and communicate with any impure thing! With what an ardent desire, and zeal, and resolution, should this inspire

inſpire us to perform all noble, and brave, and extraordinary actions for the cauſe of God! The Holy Spirit is pleaſed to take up his reſidence within us. How pure and ſpotleſs, how untainted with worldly luſts and ſenſual affections, ought we to preſerve our hearts! How ſhall we dare to let any unclean thing approach ſo ſacred a place, unleſs we could ſuppoſe that light can have fellowſhip with darkneſs, or that God can have communion with Belial. The Holy Spirit is pleaſed to dwell with us, and to dwell with us for ever, if we baniſh him not. How ought this to refreſh us under all afflictions, ſupport us under all temptations, animate and encourage us in the moſt dangerous adventures that we are called out unto! How can we deſpair of victory in all our conteſts againſt the world, the fleſh, and the devil, when we have one ſo mighty to ſave, ready at hand upon all occaſions! How can we want relief in the greateſt extremities, when the fountain of joy and conſolation has taken up his lodging in our ſouls!

2. But ſecondly, Let us take occaſion from hence to admire the infinite love, and affection, and tenderneſs that the Holy Spirit of God bears towards us. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit.*——The words intimate a ſenſe of grief and trouble in him, when we ſhew any unkindneſs to him. He ſeems to be afflicted and made ſad when we behave ourſelves frowardly and perverſly towards him. It is true, there are no paſſions, properly ſpeaking, in the divine nature; nor can the Holy Spirit be capable either of joy or grief, or any other human affection: But all theſe things are attributed to God by way of compliance with our infirmities, who are not wont to be ſo deeply affected with things, unleſs they be conveyed to us in ſuch a way as we ourſelves have experience of. But this is certain, that as from the

terms of God's fury and indignation, and the like, we may safely conclude the infinite aversion that is in his nature to all sin and wickedness; so from such phrases, as these of his repenting of the evil, of his pitying and having compassion on his creatures, of his being grieved and made sad by the injuries that are done to him, we may conclude the infinite love and good-will he bears to mankind. If therefore the consideration of the infiniteness of his majesty who dwelleth within us, will not prevail upon us to treat him with respect and reverence; yet, one would think, if we had any ingenuity, that the sense of the unkindness that he takes when he is ill-treated by us, should work upon us. Will the holy blessed God vouchsafe to be grieved for such a worm as I am, when I refuse his kindness, and will not comply with his love? And shall not I be grieved for my own ingratitude? Can I be so impudent as to live in a daily course of forgetfulness of God, and transgressing his laws, when by so doing I do not only affront his sovereignty and greatness, but also sin against the greatest kindness and tenderness, that ever was conceived in any breast? A kindness so great, that it cannot be expressed? The best words to set it out are borrowed from our passions and tendrest sense of things that we have: But, alas! they fall infinitely short of truly expressing the love that God bears to us. Oh! therefore let us think upon this. Let us consider what it is only to grieve or afflict by our unkindness any one that is our friend, and who hath by all instances of goodness endeavoured to deserve well of us. Human nature cannot bear the thoughts of having disobliged such an one without a sensible trouble. Oh then! how can we with patience endure to think of grieving the Holy Spirit, who, as he is, without comparison,

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the beſt friend we are capable of having, (as he hath done more for us, and is ready to do more for us, than we can either expect or imagine) ſo is he pleaſed to expreſs his reſentment of our unkindneſs in ſo tender and affectionate a manner, as if he was one of our own nature; nay, joined in the neareſt relation and friendſhip to us.

But I leave this, to ſhew in the next place what thoſe things are by which the Holy Spirit is grieved.

Now, in general it may be ſaid, that our ſins, and they only, are the things which do grieve the Holy Spirit. There is nothing in the world in us, but ſin, that give him any diſpleaſure. Neither the infirmities of our nature, nor the circumſtances of our condition in the world, nor our manifold temptations, nor perſecutions, nor diſtreſſes, nor any thing in us, or about us, can ſeparate us from the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus. It is only ſin: A wilful ſwerving from the rules that God hath ſet us, and by which the Holy Spirit deſires to govern us, that can give him occaſion of offence. For this is the only thing in the world that is contradictory to his nature, and to the ends for which he is pleaſed to dwell within us. But tho' this be the general anſwer to the enquiry, yet, for the impreſſing the thing the more upon the mind, I ſhall branch it out into four particulars, purſuing the metaphor of the text, which ſuppoſes the Holy Spirit to be a gueſt or a lodger in our hearts.

1. And firſt of all, We grieve the Holy Spirit, when we neglect him, when we behave ourſelves with careleſneſs and indifference towards him. It muſt needs trouble any gueſt to ſee that he who entertains him, tho' he doth not openly affront him, yet doth not ſhew him that reſpect he deſerves, nor takes care to pleaſe

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him in all things. This very thing is a kind of slighting of him; and the same slight we put upon the Holy Ghost, when we do not heartily give up ourselves to be governed by him in all things; when we do not diligently attend to his holy motions, and vigorously pursue them: But on the contrary live careless and idle lives, suffering the good thoughts that God is daily suggesting to our minds, to die in us, without any effect. This must needs grieve the Holy Spirit, for it is a plain evidence that we neglect him. If we had that regard for him that we ought, we should not suffer that care he takes of us, and that he hath of our good, to be thus utterly without effect; but we should be watchful over ourselves, and be continually looking into our own hearts, and seeing how things went there, and improve every opportunity, every good motion that the Spirit affords us, to our advancement in virtue and goodness. It is not enough that we live without doing any great hurt in the world, that we are not guilty of grievous and scandalous crimes; but we must be heartily and sincerely good, and we must be daily growing better and better. This is the end of the Spirit's dwelling within us: And if we do not make use of his presence to this end, we shall provoke him, at length, to forsake us, and give us up as trifling souls, upon whom no good is to be done.

2. But secondly, As we grieve the Holy Spirit by our carelessness and indifference, and not attending to his holy motions; so we do yet more grieve him by every act of wilful, deliberate sin; or by sinning against our conscience, either in single acts, or in a habit of any sin. Sins of ignorance and inadvertency, sins that we fall into unawares and thro' surprize, the Holy Spirit will bear with; but the indulging of any one sin in the course

courſe of our lives, or the committing any one act of ſin againſt our natural light, wilfully, deliberately, when the Holy Spirit within us teſtifies to us, that we ought not to do ſuch a thing; I ſay, this is ſo high an affront put upon the bleſſed Spirit, that it is not to be borne withal: it is a downright violation of all the laws of hoſpitality: it is a betraying our gueſt, and taking part with his open enemies. And what gueſt will not forſake his habitation when he is thus treated. Oh! therefore, as we love our ſouls, let us have a care of theſe ſins; let us do nothing againſt our conſcience; let us never willingly and deliberately do a thing that we know to be evil. It is not to be told how much by any ſuch actions as theſe we wound our own ſouls, and what miſery we bring upon ourſelves. This is the certain way to drive away the Holy Spirit from us, and if ever he do return again, it muſt be upon a very ſevere and particular repentance.

3. Thirdly, Tho' all ſins do grieve the Holy Spirit, and wilful ſins moſt; yet there are ſome ſins that have a mark ſet upon them in the ſcripture, as being of ſuch a nature as to grieve the Holy Spirit in a more particular manner than others. And theſe are the ſins that are more immediately committed againſt our bodies. Such are all ſorts of uncleanneſs and intemperance. The Spirit of God is a ſpirit of purity, and therefore nothing ſo oppoſite to him as all fleſhly pollutions and ſenſuality. Indeed the very notion of his being a gueſt and lodger with us, ſuppoſeth that we are obliged in a more particular manner to take care that our hearts, where he is to dwell, ſhould be thoroughly purged from every thing that is filthy and and unclean. And this is the very argument that St. Paul uſes to the Corinthians, to make them eſpecially careful to avoid fornication, and other uncleanneſs; namely, becauſe their bodies

bodies were *the temples of the Holy Ghoſt.* *The body,* ſays he, *is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Chriſt! Shall I then take the members of Chriſt, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid! Flee fornication. Every ſin that a man doth, is without the body: But he that committeth fornication, ſinneth againſt his own body.* And ye *know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghoſt, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own,* 1 Cor. vi. 13. 15. 18. 19. And in the text we are now upon, when St. Paul bids us not to *grieve the Spirit,* he ſeems to have an eſpecial regard to the grieving him by wantonneſs and uncleanneſs, by lewd and ſcurrilous diſcourſes. This the context plainly intimates. For in the verſe before, he gives them this caution; *Let no corrupt communication,* ſays he, *proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers,* Eph. iv. 29. And then it follows in the text, *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.* And what we ſay of luſt and uncleanneſs, the ſame is to be ſaid of gluttony and drunkenneſs: for theſe are as noiſome and offenſive to the Holy Spirit as the other, and render the man who is guilty of them every whit as incapable of his divine inſpirations. Indeed the Spirit of God cannot lodge in a ſoul that is impure and ſenſual in any kind. And therefore, if ever we expect *to be ſealed to the day of redemption,* it will infinitely concern us all to *keep our bodies pure and undefiled, to poſſeſs them in ſanctification and honour,* 1 Theſſ. iv. 4. A man that is given to luſt or drunkenneſs, is no more capable of receiving or lodging the Holy Spirit, than a ſtye is fit to be made a temple.

4. But fourthly and laſtly, As there are ſome particular ſins, ſo there are ſome particular circumſtances of

ſins, that do likewiſe grieve him in a more eſpecial manner than others. Now of theſe circumſtances, this I cannot but take notice of, as a chief one, viz. our continuing to purſue a ſinful courſe of life after we have often engaged ourſelves by ſolemn vows and reſolutions to forſake it. There is nothing more hated by God or man, than the ſin of unfaithfulneſs and ingratitude. The beſt friend in the world, if time after time we abuſe his kindneſſes, if upon every turn when we have need of him we ſolemnly engage to him to do this or the other thing that he would have us, and yet when that turn is ſerved, we forget all our promiſes and engagements, and fall again to that practice that we know will above all things in the world diſoblige him: I ſay, in ſuch a caſe as this, the beſt friend in the world will, without ſcruple, ſhake off all thoughts of friendſhip with us, and have nothing more to do with perſons who are ſo ungrateful and perfidious. It is a matter of great comfort to us, that the patience and kindneſs of God doth ſo infinitely exceed that of the beſt friends upon earth. But yet our baſeneſs, and treachery, and inconſtancy, in a cuſtomary breach of vows and promiſes, I ſay theſe things will (if any thing in the world can) provoke God Almighty to abandon us, and leave us to ourſelves. The holy Spirit of God will ſtrive with us for a long time; but God hath told us, that *his Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with us*, Gen. vi. 3. We may, by our frequent back-ſlidings, after our ſolemn engagements to the contrary, ſo *weary* him (if I may ſpeak in ſcripture language, Iſa. vii. 13. Jer. xv. 6. Mal. ii. 17.) that he may think fit to give us up. However, it is certain, that every man that is thus falſe and treacherous, takes the moſt ready courſe in the world to bring this judgment upon himſelf.

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And so much it may suffice to have spoken upon the precept itself, *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.*

I come now to the other part of my text, viz. The argument wherewith St. Paul enforces this precept; and that is the consideration that it the is Spirit *that sealeth us unto the day of redemption.* In speaking to which words, I must, First, Enquire what is meant by the day of redemption. Secondly, What is meant by being sealed unto the day of redemption. And, Thirdly, How, or in what sense the Holy Spirit doth thus seal christians. From all which it will apappear what a mighty argument the consideration of this ought to be to us, *not to grieve the Spirit.*

I. And first let us enquire what is meant by the day of redemption. The writers of the New-testament speak of a four-fold redemption which Christ hath wrought for us, viz. A redemption from the law: A redemption from the guilt and punishment of sin: A redemption from the dominion and power of sin: And a redemption from the grave.

1. I shall speak a word or two upon each of these particulars. The scriptures speak of a redemption from the law. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles thro' Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith,* Gal. iii. 13, 14. And again, *When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,* Gal. iv. 4, 5. The Jews were properly and immediately concerned in this redemption from the law; for none were under the law; (viz. obliged to obedience to it, or obnoxious to the curses of it) but they to whom it was given. And this redemption

demption consisted in this, that Christ, by his death, did wholly put an end to the mosaical covenant, so that the Jews were no longer under the obligation to the law, nor subject to the inconveniencies it brought upon them. And justly might this be called a redemption; for it was a restoration of that people from a state of bondage into a state of liberty, Gal. xxiv. 5, 31. So long as they were under that covenant (viz. the dispensation of the law) they were in a servile condition, *rather servants than sons*, (ver. 1, 2, 3. 5.) nor was it possible for them, by means of the law, to attain *to justification*, Rom. iii. 20. or a state of God's favour and acceptance. But Christ, by putting an end to this covenant, set on foot a better, viz. the evangelical, that was first made with Adam, and then with Abraham, 430 *years before the law*, Gal. iii. 20. which, as it gave better conditions (requiring only faith and repentance instead of many cumbersome ceremonies) so it was *established upon better promises*, Heb. viii. 6. making over to us not only the pardon of our sins, and the assistances of the Spirit, but eternal rewards in another world. So that to be redeemed from the law, was indeed an inestimable privilege.

But it may be asked, how doth this redemption concern us Gentiles, since we were never under the law? I answer, it doth concern us infinitely; and the benefit we have received hereby, is as great as that was to to them. It is true, we cannot properly be said *to be redeemed from the curse of the law*, because we were never obnoxious to it; (*for what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law*, Rom. iii. 19.) but then we were in as bad a condition, or worse; for we were left in our pure naturals, in that low degenerate state, in which we came into the world; tho' we were not sub-

ſubject to the maledictions contained in the law, yet we were ſubject to that death, which was the general puniſhment threatened to the diſobedient under the law, and was the curſe and ſentence denounced againſt Adam and his poſterity. And we had no more light or means to approve ourſelves to God, or to attain to a ſtate of juſtification or ſalvation, than the Jews themſelves had under the law: Nay, indeed, not near ſo much. But now Chriſt's redeeming the Jews from the curſe of the law, and entring them into a new covenant, Gal. iii. 29, &c. 1 Cor. i. 30. or rather renewing the old covenant of the goſpel made with Abraham, became juſtification and ſalvation to us Gentiles alſo. For ſo had God ordered the matter in his diſpenſation of times and ſeaſons, that when the moſaical covenant ſhould be abrogated (which *was a wall of ſeparation and partition between the* Jews *and* Gentiles, Eph. ii. 14.) and the evangelical covenant take place in the ſtead thereof, then ſhould the *Gentiles* alſo be *adopted into God's family*, and *they which were before ſtrangers and aliens*, ſhould become equally his ſons and heirs with them, who had before been his peculiar people, Rom. xi. Eph. ii. 12, 13. 19. Gal. iv. 5. And this is the *great myſtery* that St. Paul ſo often ſpeaks of, Rom. xi. 33, &c. Chriſt, when he put an end to the covenant of the law, brought both Jews and Gentiles into one and the ſame new covenant; and gave to both the ſame promiſes, and the ſame means, and the ſame hopes of ſalvation, Eph. iii. 6. ſo that the one had no advantage above the other. And upon this account it is that we find St. Paul mentioning the redemption of the Jews from the law as a matter that did nearly concern, and much redound to the benefit of the Gentiles; as particularly in the two texts above cited; *Chriſt hath re-*

redeemed us from the curſe of the law, that the bleſſing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jeſus Chriſt. And what the bleſſing of Abraham was, the next words ſhew; *That we*, viz. both Jews and Gentiles, *might receive the promiſe of the Spirit thro' faith*, Gal. iii. 13, 14. The promiſe of the Spirit was one of the great privileges of the evangelical covenant, which was made with *Abraham*. And this promiſe was not made over to the Jews by their law; but when that law was abrogated by Chriſt, then that promiſe was made good both to them and to the Gentiles. And to the ſame purpoſe ſpeaks that other paſſage I quoted, *The Son of God was ſent to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of ſons*, (Gal. iv. 5.) viz. he was ſent to redeem the Jews from their bondage, that from thenceforward Jews and Gentiles might be no longer diſcriminated, but all might be made heirs of ſalvation through faith in Jeſus Chriſt.

I have dwelt the longer upon this head, to give ſome light to thoſe texts which relate to the redemption from the law; becauſe it is a point which is generally little underſtood, and conſequently much miſrepreſented. Nor indeed can there be any good ſenſe in the notion of this redemption, unleſs we take along with us the key that I have given: But with the help of this we may clear up ſeveral paſſages in St. Paul's epiſtles, which are commonly thought very obſcure and difficult.

And it appears, from what has been ſaid, that this redemption from the law is ſo far from being an inconſiderable thing, with reſpect to us of the Gentile world, that it is the foundation of all the other three redemptions that remain to be ſpoken to, viz. from the guilt of ſin, from the power of it, and from the grave, or the power of death: All theſe follow upon it; or it is

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the general under which these particulars are contained. For you see that the notion of redemption from the law, as that term is used in scripture, doth not only imply the abrogation of the first covenant of the law, but takes into it the establishing a new covenant, both with Jews and Gentiles. Now the promises made over in this new covenant are neither more nor fewer than these three: First, The pardon of sin, which is the very same thing with redemption from the guilt of sin. Secondly, The assistance and graces of the Spirit, which are the same thing with the second redemption from the power of sin. And thirdly, Eternal salvation of body and soul in the other world, which is the last redemption I mentioned, viz. from the grave. So that our redemption from the law doth virtually contain in it all the others.

2. But however, for the clearing the text, it is fit that something should be said to each particular. In the second place therefore, when the scripture speaks of the redemption that was wrought for us by Jesus Christ, sometimes by that term is meant a deliverance from our sins, viz. from the guilt and punishment of them. Thus is the word used in Eph. i. 7. and Colos. i. 14. In both which texts we meet with this passage (where the apostle is speaking of Jesus Christ) *In whom*, says he, *we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*. Christ by his death procured for all believers the remission of all their sins, bought off the punishment that was due to them; so that no true disciple of his shall ever be called to an account for them in another world. And this is that notion of redemption that doth commonly obtain among us. When we speak of Christ as our Redeemer, we mean it with relation to his dying for our sins, or making such satisfaction to God for them, that we, upon the account there-

thereof, are acquitted or juſtified, though this be indeed only one branch of our redemption.

3. For, in the third place, Chriſt came as much to redeem us from the dominion of our ſins, as from the guilt of them. It was never his deſign that a wicked man ſhould be juſtified before God, and continue ſtill wicked: but he was ſent as well to deſtroy ſin in our mortal bodies (to ſubdue it ſo by the power of the Spirit, that it ſhould not reign in us) as he was ſent to deliver us from the dreadful conſequences of it, viz. the puniſhments of another life, which would otherwiſe have fallen upon us. And this is another notion of redemption that we meet with in ſcripture; as for inſtance, *Chriſt gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. In this place it is plain that Chriſt's redemption of us is the enabling us to mortify all our luſts and evil habits, and to become holy and virtuous livers; that as before we were the ſlaves of ſin and of the devil, ſo we ſhould from henceforward walk as the freemen of Jeſus Chriſt.

4. But then, beſides theſe three notions of redemption already mentioned, there is alſo a fourth in the New-teſtament, and which indeed is the conſummation of all the reſt, without which they would not have been compleat: and that is the eternal glorification both of our ſouls and bodies at the laſt appearance of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. As we were obnoxious to eternal puniſhment for our ſins, which Chriſt by his death redeemed us from; as likewiſe we were the ſlaves and vaſſals of ſin, which ſlavery Chriſt, by ſending his Holy Spirit, redeemed us from; ſo after theſe redemptions were wrought, there ſtill remained a fourth, viz. the redemption of our bodies from the grave, and the uniting

uniting them with our ſouls in perfect happineſs. And this to be effected by that Spirit which raiſed up Jeſus from the dead at the day of the general reſurrection. Now in this ſenſe, as well as in the other fore-named, we have the word redemption frequently uſed in the New-teſtament; as Heb. ix. 12. *Chriſt by entering into the holy place* (that is, the higheſt heavens) *hath obtained eternal redemption for us.* That is to ſay, our Saviour aſcending up into heaven with his body, to ſit at the right-hand of God for evermore, is an evidence to us, that he hath obtained an eternal redemption for us: and he is a pledge and aſſurance to us, that our bodies ſhall be redeemed from the grave, and live in heaven eternally with him. This likewiſe is the notion of redemption in the viiith chapter to the Romans, ver. 23. there, ſays the apoſtle, *We ourſelves, who have the firſt-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourſelves groan within ourſelves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.* Where you may obſerve, that that conſummation of happineſs at the general day of judgment, which St. Paul and other chriſtians here waited for, and groaned after, is called by two names; firſt, the adoption, or ſonſhip: and the reaſon of this name is clear, becauſe chriſtians are not, and ſhall not be compleatly manifeſted to be the ſons of God, till they be made partakers of the reſurrection. For this we have our Saviour's expreſs authority, who, ſpeaking of thoſe who ſhall be *thought worthy of the rewards of the other world in that day*, tells us, *that they are the children of God, being* (or becauſe they are) *the children of the reſurrection*, Luke xx. 36. Rom. viii. 19. The other term, by which that ſtate of future happineſs is expreſſed, is the redemption of the body; which is a very proper expreſſion. As for our ſouls, they

they were redeemed before, by being delivered from the power of ſin, and from the eternal puniſhment conſequent upon it; and to no other kinds of death were they obnoxious. But our bodies are not redeemed till that glorious happy day, when they ſhall be reſtored from the grave to live for ever with the ſoul in unſpeakable happineſs. Another text, wherein the word redemption is taken in that notion we are ſpeaking of, is in the firſt chapter to the Epheſians, ver. 13, 14. where the apoſtle ſaith, *After that ye believed ye were ſealed with the holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion.* In which text there is no difficulty, when we know what is meant by *the purchaſed poſſeſſion*, or, as it is render'd in the margin, *peculiar treaſure*. And, without doubt, this muſt be underſtood of the church, the whole body of faithful chriſtians, whom Chriſt purchaſed with his blood; upon which account they may truly be called his *purchaſed poſſeſſion*, or his *peculiar treaſure*, as the Iſraelites were called by God after he had brought them out of Egypt, Exod. xix. 5. Well then, if *the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſions*, Pſal. cxxxv. 4. be no more than the redemption of the church, or the whole body of chriſtians; then the plain ſenſe of the place is, that God gives us his holy Spirit as an earneſt of that inheritance which he will beſtow upon us at the general redemption of the church, which will be at the day of the reſurrection. And there is no doubt but this paſſage and my text are directly parallel, and mean the ſame thing. No doubt but the redemption here muſt be the ſame with the redemption there, viz. not any redemption that is paſt or preſent, but that of chriſtians, which is yet to come at the general judgment. In truth, there is no other notion of re-

redemption that will fit the place. And of this it is that our Lord himself seems to speak, where, having mentioned the signs that should precede his approach to judgment, he says, *When ye see these things come to pass, then lift up your heads, and look up, for your redemption draweth nigh*, Luke xxi. 28.

Having thus given a particular account of the several notions of redemption, and shewn from thence how we are to understand *the day of redemption* in my text; let us, in the next place, enquire what is meant by *being sealed to this day of redemption*: of which I shall speak more briefly.

II. A seal hath always been used for two especial purposes; either for the confirmation of covenants and contracts between God and man, or for marking any thing for one's own. Now to either of these uses of a seal, we may suppose the apostle to allude, when he says that we are sealed by the Spirit. If we take it in the former notion, then the sense is this; that as it is the custom amongst men, to confirm their agreements and covenants by mutually setting their seals to the instruments wherein the articles of them are recorded, so God having made a covenant with all faithful christians, wherein he promises to give them eternal life in the other world, he is pleased to ratify this covenant, and the promises therein made on his part, by sending down the holy Spirit into their hearts; which is the strongest assurance that he can possibly give, that he sincerely intends to make good to us what he has promised, and that on his side the contract is inviolable. And such a seal hath God set to this covenant of Christianity, as hath infinitely the pre-eminence above the seal of the Jewish covenant that was before it, and gives

greater ſecurity to us that God will perform it. The ſeal of that covenant was only an outward ſeal, an external mark in the fleſh, viz. circumciſion: But this is an inward ſeal, a ſeal in the heart and mind. The Iſraelites were ſealed in their fleſh to the poſſeſſion of the earthly land of Canaan; but chriſtians are ſealed in the inward man by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon their minds, to the poſſeſſion of that inheritance that is eternal in the heavens. But we may well ſuppoſe that the apoſtle doth by this phraſe of ſealing allude to the other uſe of a ſeal, as it was, and is ſtill uſed by merchants and men of trade, viz. as a declaration of their right and propriety in a thing. Thus it was the cuſtom of thoſe perſons, [that] whatever commodity was bought by them, or conſigned to them, to have their ſeal or mark put upon it, whereby it might be diſtinguiſhed from all others, and known to be theirs only: Nay, in thoſe times they did not only ſet their ſeal upon goods, but upon perſons too, whom they bought or had any property in. And accordingly, in alluſion to this, we find in the revelations, that the true worſhippers of Jeſus Chriſt, that were to be ſaved in the midſt of the judgments and calamities that were to fall upon the antichriſtian churches, are ſaid to have the ſeal of God on their foreheads: And on the other ſide, they who belonged to the beaſt, who were ſubjects of antichriſt, are ſaid to have the mark of the beaſt upon them. And in this ſenſe the phraſe is uſed even of our Lord our Jeſus Chriſt, for he is ſaid *to be ſealed by the Father*, John vi. 26. viz. God, by his ſending the Holy Spirit down upon him at his baptiſm, did declare to all the world, that Jeſus Chriſt was owned by him. And in this ſenſe all chriſtians may be truly ſaid to be ſealed by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption; that is, God, by giving them the Spirit, hath marked them for his own;

they have an evidence in themſelves that they belong to him, and that they ſhall certainly have their portion in the reſurrection of the juſt. And this I take to be the full meaning of the phraſe in my text, of *being ſealed.*

III. My third and laſt enquiry is, How, and in what ſenſe the Spirit doth ſeal us to that day. There are three notions of it.

The firſt of which is very falſe, though commonly received.

The ſecond is true, but yet not full; nor I ſuppoſe, principally intended in this place.

And therefore I conceive the third is to be preferred.

1. The firſt account of the Spirit's ſealing is this: We commonly take the Spirit's ſealing us to the day of redemption, to be his teſtifying to our hearts that God is reconciled to us, and hath forgiven us all our ſins. We fanſy that he doth, as it were, whiſper it into our ears; we ſeem to hear a voice within us that bids us be of good comfort, for God hath accepted us. Now when we have theſe ſuggeſtions, we believe that then the Spirit doth ſeal us, and witneſs with our ſpirit: But when we find our minds cloudy and melancholy, ſo that we think not ſo well of ourſelves, then we believe that we are in a ſtate of deſertion, that God hath forſaken us, and refuſes to ſeal us with the Holy Ghoſt. Now, according to this notion, the ſenſe of my text muſt be, have a care that you do not grieve the Holy Spirit; for if you do, he will not teſtify to your minds that you are the children of God, but you ſhall be in a very doubtful and uncertain condition, and want all that comfort and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, which otherwiſe you might have. But to this I ſay, that tho' I doubt not but that God ſometimes, and in ſome particular

ticular cafes, is pleafed to manifeft his goodnefs to the fouls of pious perfons in an extraordinary manner, and to fill them with inexpreffible joy and confolation, and to poffefs them with an undoubted affurance of their eternal happinefs, more particularly at the hour of death, or in a time of difficult trials, efpecially in the cafe of martyrdom: Yet I deny utterly, that this is the fealing of the Spirit fpoken of in the text, and that for thefe reafons; firft of all, there is no text of fcripture that gives countenance to fuch an interpretation of the fealing of the Spirit; for all thofe that I know of, place his fealing in his being within us, and not in his fuggefting to our minds a good opinion of ourfelves: And thus it is we muft interpret that famous text of St. Paul, of *the Spirit's witneffing with our fpirits, that we are the fons of God*, Rom. viii. 16. as any one will be convinced, who carefully examines the context, and confiders the occafion upon which thefe words are made ufe of.

Secondly, It is no where promifed by God in fcripture, that men fhall ordinarily have that teftimony of the goodnefs of their condition that this notion implieth, and confequently the fealing of the Spirit cannot confift in it. The ordinary way of coming to an affurance of our future happinefs is, by reafoning with our own hearts, examining and comparing our lives and actions with the rule that Chrift hath given us to walk by. If our confciences, upon fuch an examination, give us in evidence that we have fincerely performed the conditions of the chriftian covenant required on our parts, viz. that we do truly believe and repent; then we may conclude that we are in a fafe and good condition. I fay, this is the way that the fcripture (Lam. iii. 40. Gal. vi. 4. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.) chalketh out to us for the gain-

ing of assurance; and no man can come to it otherwise, unless God be pleased to deal with him in an extraordinary and miraculous way, which I suppose, every one is not to expect.

Thirdly, If the sealing of the Spirit be the Spirit's possessing our minds with a strong persuasion that our sins are forgiven, what will become of them who never had this strong persuasion, and yet, for all that, are very honest, and sincere, and devout christians? There are a great many in the world, who truly desire and endeavour to serve God as well as they can, and live honest and virtuous lives, and hope well too in the mercies of God, but yet have none of those extraordinary overflowing consolations of the Spirit that this notion supposeth: Nay, many of them are frequently apt to distrust their own condition, as thinking they are not so good as they should be; Nay, and perhaps they may die in that opinion. What shall we say of such? that they are not sealed by the Spirit to the day of redemption? God forbid! I should much less doubt of the happiness of such a person in the world to come, tho' I saw him go out of this world unsatisfied as to his future state, than I should of one who had those sweet and comfortable inspirations of his being the child of God, if I saw that he had been less careful in his life and conversation than the other.

But fourthly, That strong assurance which we sometimes feel in our minds that we are in a good condition, cannot be the Spirit's sealing to the day of redemption, upon this account; that at this rate, the Spirit's sealing us would be no seal of God at all; viz. it would be a very fallible seal, and the man who had it, might for all that be in a miserable condition. The plain English is, that there is nothing in this persuasion

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or confidence of our good condition (unleſs it be fetched from ſome other ground than this ſtrong impulſe on our minds) but what a very wicked man may have as well as the beſt. A wicked man may at ſome times, and in ſome humours, eſpecially when his brains are heated, and his blood runs quick in his veins, and he hath for ſome time vigorouſly bent his mind to the applying of Chriſt's righteouſneſs to his own ſoul: I ſay, in ſuch a fit of devotion as this, he may eaſily be brought to fanſy himſelf as true a believer, and as great a ſaint, as the beſt of them; though in the mean time there is no real laſting change made upon his heart, but when the heat is over, he becomes the ſame man he was before. All that I mean is this, that if there be no other notion of the ſeal of the Spirit of God but this that I am ſpeaking againſt, it may oftentimes prove no more than a ſtrong fancy: and the perſon that will the moſt eaſily come by this ſeal, will not be he who ſtudies to ſerve God beſt, but he who hath the moſt lively and briſk imagination; which is, in effect, to make the ſeal of the Spirit of God a foundation for all the enthuſiaſm in the world.

2. But ſecondly, Leaving this extravagant notion of the ſeal of the Spirit, let us come to a more ſober and juſtifiable one. Many very learned interpreters do conceive, that *the Spirit of God, whereby we are ſealed to the day of redemption*, is to be underſtood of thoſe extraordinary miraculous effuſions of the Spirit, which were vouchſafed to the chriſtians of the apoſtles time, for the quicker ſpreading, and the greater confirmation of the chriſtian religion; all which gifts of the Spirit are ceaſed in our days. Now, according to this notion of the Spirit, the ſenſe of the text is this, that the Spirit of God, which was in this manner poured forth

upon the apoſtles and the other chriſtians in their days, was a ſeal and an evidence to them and to all the world, that the chriſtians were the children of God, that he owned their cauſe, that he acknowledged them for his people, and would reward them at the day of the general retribution: Nay, theſe works of the Spirit were not only a ſeal to the chriſtians of thoſe days, but to us at this time, and will be ſo to the end of the world. For the works that were then done, are a confirmation to us at this day, of the truth of Chriſtianity, and a ſeal that God hath ſet to the evangelical covenant, that he will make good the promiſes of the goſpel to the whole ſucceſſion of believers for ever. This now, it cannot be denied, is a very true ſenſe of the Spirit's ſealing, and ought by no means to be refuſed or excluded; but yet I conceive it is not the full ſenſe of the words, nor the ſenſe principally intended by them. And my reaſon is this, becauſe it appears pretty clear from the context, and alſo from the text itſelf, that the Spirit is here conſidered as a lodger and a gueſt in the heart of chriſtians, and under that notion they are bound not to grieve him; and every chriſtian is concerned in that advice or precept; and he is therefore concerned, becauſe the Holy Spirit is to ſeal to him a title to his eternal inheritance. But now *if the Spirit's ſealing to the day of redemption* be only his confirmation of chriſtianity by the extraordinary works which were wrought in the primitive times, then either all perſons are not concerned in the prohibition of not grieving him (but only thoſe in whom he vouchſafed his extraordinary preſence in order to the working miracles): Or, if all perſons be concerned in it, then the argument, whereby the apoſtle would enforce it, is either none at all, or but a very dry one. It is therefore reaſonable to believe,

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3. In the third place, that these words are spoken not with relation to the extraordinary works of the Spirit, but to his constant assistances to all christians; and the true sense and meaning of our being sealed by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption will be this; that the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, and enabling us to mortify our lusts, and to live a life of purity and holiness, is that seal that God hath set upon us to distinguish us from the rest of the world, and to make us his own children. For any man to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, is a certain argument that he belongs to God, and that he shall be raised up among the happy at the last day. On the contrary, whosoever hath not the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, cannot plead any right to the promises of everlasting life made by our Saviour. Which St. Paul does more fully make out in his eighth chapter of the Romans.

This then is the sum of the text, that we had need be very careful how we grieve or offend the Holy Spirit, because our everlasting happiness or misery depends upon his dwelling, or not dwelling within us. If we so carry ourselves as not to grieve him, he will dwell within us; and that indwelling of his, is our certain evidence and security that we shall be made partakers of everlasting life. If by a careless and wicked course, we so provoke him, that he quits his habitation, and leaves us to ourselves, then we have no seal of God upon us, we can challenge no right or property to the rewards of God's children at the last day, but are left in the crowd of the miserable, to receive our portion with apostate angels, and with hypocrites and unbelievers.

DISCOURSE IV.

Of the various callings in life: And the inferences from thence. That Chriſtianity makes no change in human callings, or in the civil relations of life: And the inferences from thence. Of the requiſites of a lawful calling, and how it is to be diſtinguiſhed from one that is unlawful. Of gaming.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

1 Cor. vii. 17.

But as God hath diſtributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, ſo let him walk: And ſo ordain I in all the churches.

AT the firſt reading of theſe words one would think that God's *diſtribution to every man*, here ſpoken of, was meant of the *Chariſmata*, or thoſe ſpiritual gifts which were in the times of the apoſtles plentifully beſtowed upon all ſorts of chriſtians in an extraordinary and miraculous way, for the edification of the church,

church, as indeed the phraſe is ſometimes uſed in theſe epiſtles. But the relation which this text hath to what goes before doth neceſſarily determine us to underſtand the words, *as God hath diſtributed to every man*, in another way. The apoſtle, in this epiſtle, has frequent occaſion to diſcourſe about the notion and limits of chriſtian liberty; and in this chapter he reſolves a caſe or two *ex profeſſo*, which were put to him about one great point, wherein it was pretended chriſtian liberty was mightily concerned, and that was in the buſineſs of matrimony. The caſe was this, whether a chriſtian who was married to an unbeliever (that is, either to an infidel, jew, or heathen) might not, by virtue of his chriſtian liberty, depart from the unbelieving party, and diſpoſe of himſelf as he thought fit. Of this St. Paul's reſolution is, that if any, who hath taken upon him Chriſt's religion, *have an unbelieving woman to his wife, and ſhe is willing to dwell with him*, notwithſtanding his new religion, *he ſhould not put her away*, ver. 12. And, on the contrary, if a chriſtian woman had an infidel for her huſband, ſhe ſhould not depart from him ſo long as he was willing to cohabit with her, ver. 13. This is the effect of what he has ſaid in the verſes immediately before my text. And for this advice he gives two reaſons; one drawn from the benefits which might come to both by thus living together; for, in all probability, it might be a means to bring over the unbeliever, whether it was huſband or wife, to the true belief, and ſo ſave their ſouls: The other is drawn from the nature of Chriſtianity in general, which is ſuch, that it never made, nor doth make any alteration in the civil relations or callings of mankind; but left men, as to theſe things, in the ſame circumſtances in which it found them; and therefore it was

fit and reasonable that all men should continue in that calling, and that condition, into which they were disposed by the divine Providence at that time when they were called to be christians. And this is that which is represented in the words of my text, and the true account of the relation it hath to the foregoing part of the chapter. *As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every man, so let him walk:* That is, into what condition or lot soever a man is put by the Providence of God, in what state or function soever he was placed, when our Lord Jesus called him to be a disciple, in that let him continue, in that let him walk, even after his becoming a christian. And this, says the apostle, *I do ordain*, as a rule to be observed, not only among you Corinthians, but *in all other churches.* And having laid down this general advice, he dilates upon it in an instance or two more in the following words; *Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not become circumcised*, ver. 18. That is to say, Is any Jew converted to christianity? Let him not, after his conversion, use any art to make himself appear as if he had never been circumcised. And so, on the contrary, let no Gentile when he comes over to Christ's religion, put on the badge of judaism, which is circumcision, but let him remain as he his. And so again, in the 21st verse; *Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it; but if thou may'st be made free, use it rather:* That is, art thou in a condition of a slave or bondman when thou receivest christianity? Do not think that the liberty which thou obtainest by thy christianity will allow thee to go away from thy master: No, if thy master will set thee free, it is well for thee, and thou art to thank him for it: But if he will not, thou must keep

keep as thou art; for thy religion doth not alter the civil ſtate or condition of thy life; only there is this for thy comfort, when thou art once a chriſtian, tho' as to thy civil condition thou art a bondman, yet thou art Chriſt's freeman. Thou ſhalt enjoy all the privileges which he purchaſed for thee; which indeed are glorious and great, for thou ſhalt be ſet free from the power of ſin, and from the conſequence of it, eternal death. Which is a far greater privilege than any manumiſſion from thy earthly maſter can inſtate thee in.

This is the plain meaning of St. Paul's inſtances; which having laid down, he concludes this point with a repetition of the general exhortation that went before in my text: *Brethren, let every man abide in the ſame calling, wherein he is called*, viz. let him continue in the ſame civil ſtate of life wherein he was when he firſt became a chriſtian.

Having thus given an accoũnt of the text, I obſerve theſe three points from it, which I ſhall make the heads of my diſcourſe:

I. God hath made various diſtributions to mankind; or the diſtribution of mankind into various conditions and functions is from God.

II. The chriſtian religion hath made no change or alteration as to matters of civil degrees or callings; but hath left all men, as to theſe things, in the ſame poſture and ſtation in which it found them.

III. Since the various circumſtances and callings into which men are diſpoſed, are from God, no man can be juſtified who lives in ſuch a way, or follows ſuch a courſe of life, as cannot be ſuppoſed to be of God's diſtribution.

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The firſt of theſe points is the ſuppoſition or foundation upon which the text proceeds.

The ſecond is that which is directly intended in it.

The third is a neceſſary conſequence from it.

I. God has made various diſtributions unto mankind; or, the diſtribution of mankind into various conditions and functions is from God. *As God hath diſtributed to every man, ſo let him walk.* It is God who hath diſtributed. As he is the parent of mankind, ſo he is the author of that variety of gifts and faculties, of powers and abilities, of tempers and fitneſſes, which are to be ſeen among them: And alſo of all thoſe ſeveral ranks, degrees, and ſtations, of all thoſe ſeveral callings and functions, and employments, which muſt neceſſarily ariſe from that variety. All men are not made alike, nor framed with the ſame inclinations, nor qualified for the ſame employments, nor fitted for the ſame circumſtances. And as various as are the talents and geniuſes of mankind, no leſs various is the outward lot and condition into which they are diſpoſed. And, in truth, the neceſſities of mankind in this world do abſolutely require all this variety. Without this multitude of diſtributions, and degrees, and callings, neither public ſocieties could be maintained, nor the good of particular perſons in any tolerable way attained or ſecured. This truth St. Paul hath moſt elegantly ſet forth in the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, chap. 12. where he compares the ſociety of chriſtians to a national body. There he ſhews, that as in the natural body there are many members, and all thoſe members have not the ſame dignity and honour, nor the ſame uſe and office, and yet every member, even the meaneſt, hath its particular uſe, by which it doth real ſervice to the body; nay, ſo uſeful it is, that the body cannot be with-

without it: So it is in every commonwealth or body-politic, whether eccleſiaſtical or civil. There is a neceſſity both in the church and in the ſtate, that there ſhould be variety of functions, and degrees, and conditions. There muſt be ſome to govern, and ſome to be governed. There muſt be ſome more conſpicuous, and ſome more obſcure. Some for bodily labour, others for contemplation. Some whoſe gifts lie this way, and others whoſe talents lie the other way. And yet there is not one of theſe, but in his degree and ſtation either is, or may be, as uſeful as any who belong to the ſociety; ſo *that the eye cannot ſay to the hand, I have no need of thee*; *nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay more, thoſe members of the body which ſeem to be moſt feeble* and diſhonourable, *are* yet very *neceſſary*, 1 Cor. xii. 21, 22.

I ſpeak not this to diſcourage any man's endeavours to advance himſelf and his condition in any lawful way. No: as any man hath parts, or friends, or opportunities, he may do what he can to better his fortunes, and may leave one employment to follow another. But this I ſay, no man ought to be diſcontent with that preſent condition that by Providence he is caſt into. For if he be a good man, it is certainly beſt for him, and when it ceaſeth to be ſo, God will take care that he ſhall be put into another.

The inferences which I make from this point are theſe two following:

1. That all men, in what calling or ſtation ſoever they are placed, ought to be well pleaſed with them, ſince they come from God: *God hath diſtributed them unto them.* It is both fooliſh and ſinful for any man to be in the leaſt diſpleaſed, that he is not in ſuch deſirable circumſtances as he fanſies ſome others about him to be.

be. Others live eaſily, and fare deliciouſly, but he is forced to earn his living with the ſweat of his brow, and that but a hard one too: This man hath the talents of knowledge and learning, but he hath no abilities of that kind. Several of his neighbours have mighty advantageous, thriving employments, but his is a dull and mean one. He is forced to be a ſervant and live under the command of others, whereas others can diſpoſe of themſelves and their time as they think fit. I ſay, how unequal ſoever theſe kinds of dealings and diſpenſations ſeem to be, yet, coming from God, and being ſo neceſſary in the world, they ought to be very well taken by thoſe who are in them. God had no unkindneſs to me in placing me in this ſtation rather than another, but really dealt with me in that way which was both more fit for me, and wherein, if I be not wanting to my truſt, I may do a great deal of ſervice to my generation. I was not made for a ſtateſman or a magiſtrate, or to be great and noble. In theſe ways I might, perhaps, have undone myſelf, and done hurt to the public inſtead of good: But in that poor mean lot I am placed, I am ſecure, and may do as much ſervice to mankind in my way, as the greateſt of them can do in theirs. Every calling that is a lawful calling, every condition that comes to me by Providence, be it never ſo hard, or uneaſy, or contemptible, yet is of God, and ordained for great and good ends: And a man ought no more to be diſſatisfied with it, or take it unkindly that God has diſpoſed him into it, than the foot, in the natural body, ought to be diſpleaſed that it is not made the hand; or than the hand ought to be that it is not made the head.

2. The ſecond inference I make from this point, is, that ſince there are varieties of callings and varieties of gifts

gifts and distributions in order to the fitting men for these callings, every man in the choice of an employment or way of living for himself, or those under his charge, ought to have great regard to those natural gifts and distributions which God hath bestowed upon him or them. Every one may be serviceable to God and his country; but not all in every way; but some in one way, and some in another. Here therefore lies our great skill and prudence, to chuse fitly for ourselves. And here lies the great duty of those who have the care of youth, to place them in such circumstances as best agree with their natural temper and talents. It is a ridiculous thing to train up him to learning who hath an aversion for a book; or to put him to a trade or an active life, that is made for study and retirement. The genius, and disposition, and capacity of every one is principally to be attended to, and the education to be suited to them, and then a calling to be chosen which suits with both, and no worldly considerations ought to divert us from this proceeding. It is not a justifiable motive to design a person to any employment merely upon this account, that it is a way to raise him in the world, and by the means of the friends and interest we can make, we have a fair prospect of getting him preferment in this course. No: If there be either an averseness of temper, or an incapacity of parts, we extremely both wrong the youth under our care, and the public too, by thus yoking and fettering him. The motives of wealth and greatness, and secular advantages are then only allowable, when a man's natural talents and abilities give hopes that he is fitted for such callings, or such a kind of education, as may lead to those advantages. And, in truth, if this consideration were better attended to, abundance of young persons would

not

not miſcarry, which now do; and the world would receive a great deal more benefit and advantage by thoſe who are born into it.

II. But I proceed to my ſecond general point, which I obſerved from this text, *viz.* that chriſtianity has made no change or alteration as to matters of civil relations, or degrees, or callings among men, but has left every man, as to theſe things, in the ſame poſture and ſtation in which it found him. Every man is to abide in that condition, or that calling in which he was made a chriſtian; that is the direct ſenſe of the text. And indeed it is a true repreſentation of the nature of our religion, which, if it had been otherwiſe, would never have ſo effectually recommended itſelf to the world, as we ſee it hath done. The deſign of our Lord's coming into the world, and ſetting on foot his religion, was only to better the morals of mankind, to make them innocent, and holy, and virtuous in all conditions of life, and by that means, by the virtue of his death, to reconcile them to God, and make them heirs of everlaſting life in another world. But it was no part of his deſign to meddle with the civil conſtitution of mankind, which did ariſe from nature, and was wholly in order to this world. Chriſt meant not to intrench upon any man's rights, whether princes or private perſons: He meant not to aboliſh any privilege or any due ariſing to any man, either from cuſtom, or contract, or law: He meant not to alter the outward condition or circumſtances of any man, which the divine Providence had diſpoſed him into: For though he was a king, yet his kingdom was not of this world, but wholly in order to another; and therefore it was all one, as to his ſubjects religion, whether they were governors or governed, married or unmarried, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, bond or free,

free, ſtateſmen or mechanics; they were all equally acceptable to God, and Chriſt never intended to put them into other circumſtances. So far was he himſelf from meddling with theſe matters, that he would not ſo much as determine a controverſy between two brethren about a piece of land, leſt he ſhould be ſaid to take upon him the office of a judge. He, though he was, as I ſaid, the king of the world in a ſpiritual ſenſe, yet, being born a ſubject as to his human nature, he was as obedient to the laws, and cuſtoms, and conſtitutions of the ſtate where he lived, as the meaneſt ſubject. And as he behaved himſelf, ſo did he command all of his religion to behave in imitation of him. So likewiſe did his apoſtles exhort, to give to all men their due; to ſubmit to every conſtitution of man for the Lord's ſake; to obey thoſe who had the rule over them; and to continue in that condition, or that calling, wherein they were called to be chriſtians.

Now if this be a true repreſentation of chriſtianity, as without doubt it is, then we may juſtly make three inferences from hence:

1. Firſt, how much they are to be blamed who forſake their callings and ordinary way of living upon a pretence of a purer religion: who will needs be ſo holy, and ſo much above the pitch of other chriſtians, that they will have nothing to do with the world, or the things that concern it. Of this ſort are ſome of our enthuſiaſts, who wholly neglect the buſineſs of their callings under a pretence of religion, and run up and down from houſe to houſe, from meeting to meeting, for the gratifying their fancies, and propagating thoſe religious notions which have poſſeſſed their heads. But as for their domeſtic concerns, their families, their children, or ſervants, or the employments by which they

they ſhould get their livelihood, theſe are quite neglected and laid aſide. And of this ſort likewiſe are thoſe perſons among the Romaniſts, who, upon pretence of devotion, refuſe a calling whereby they may be in a capacity of doing ſervice to their country, or leave their calling after they have entered into it, and retire into monaſteries to live at their own eaſe, and to be free from the cares and troubles of this world. Both theſe ſorts of perſons are to be blamed. They do not conſider the nature of the chriſtian religion, which is to make men holy in their perſons and in their lives, but not in the leaſt to take them off from their worldly callings, or from uſing thoſe talents which God hath given them for the benefit of the country where they live. They do not conſider the obligation they have to the public ſociety whereof they are members, which is injured by theſe kinds of practices: For hereby they are not only render'd uſeleſs to the commonwealth, wherein, if they followed an honeſt calling, they might be very ſerviceable; but they do oftentimes a great deal of miſchief to it, by unſettling and ſubverting other men, and filling their heads with abundance of fooliſh notions and ſcruples in religion, which are dangerous to government, and the public peace and happineſs. And as for their better ſerving God, by thus leaving their callings, it is mere pretence. For he ſerves God beſt who doth moſt good in the world. But that is not to be done by throwing up our callings, but by honeſtly, and induſtriouſly, and laboriouſly proſecuting them. He ſerves God the beſt, who doth it moſt univerſally and effectually. Not he, who ſpends the moſt time in praying, or reading, or hearing, tho' all theſe be neceſſary duties, and without which it is impoſſible for a chriſtian to live as he ſhould do; but he, who,

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together with the performance of these duties, takes care to express a diligent and laborious charity to the public: To set an example of innocence and virtue, and a religious conversation in a life of business and action: To be useful to his family, to his friends, to his neighbourhood, to the whole kingdom; in educating children, doing offices of kindness and charity as he hath opportunity; serving his generation in the diligent management of those parts and those talents that God hath given him in some lawful useful employment, to the public advantage. This is that course of life which most expresses religion, and most tends to the glory of God, it being a practice of our Saviour's great precept, that we should *let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven*, Mat. v. 16.

2. If Christianity has made no alteration as to the natural and civil relations and obligations that men have to one another, but hath left these as it found them, then they are much mistaken who plead it as a part of their christianity to be exempt from obedience and subjection to the powers and magistrates of this world; that upon this very account, that they have the honour to be the servants of Christ, think themselves perfectly discharged from any other master or governor. This, though it be as wild a principle, and as opposite to christianity as can enter into the mind of man, yet there have been, and it is to be feared there still are, who call themselves christians, among whom it hath found entertainment. And here there are two sorts to be taken notice of, and to be reproved. [1.] Those who account it an infringement and violation of the privileges which Christ hath conferred upon them, to be in subjection to any one at all. Of this kind were some

ſome of the anabaptiſts in Germany and our fifth-monarchy men. They will have no king but Jeſus: All ſecular government is an uſurpation upon the Lord's people. Let Chriſt be ſet upon his throne, and down with all unchriſtian magiſtrates, whether eccleſiaſtical or civil. All the Lord's people have equal privileges, and therefore away with all degrees of ſuperiority and inferiority. *Chriſt hath bought them with a price, and therefore they muſt not be the ſervants of men, but ought to ſtand faſt in the liberty in which Chriſt hath ſet them free, and not again be entangled in the yoke of bondage.* [2.] Others there are who do not carry this levelling principle ſo high, but yet hold ſo much of it as will neceſſarily render government a precarious thing, and not fail to embroil the world in confuſion. They are not againſt magiſtrates, but againſt all wicked ungodly magiſtrates. They are not againſt ſome mens having greater honour and greater eſtates than others; but they are againſt the honour and riches of the profane. Their principle is, that the right which any man hath to a crown, or to an office, or to an eſtate, is altogether founded in his being godly and gracious, and of the right religion. But if he be a wicked man, or an oppoſer of Chriſt's true religion, he forfeits all his right and title to whatever he had, and not only may, but ought to be diſpoſſeſſed of it, though it be never ſo effectually ſecured to him by the laws of the land. But both theſe are wicked unchriſtian principles, as well as deſtructive to human ſociety. Whatever the notion of chriſtian liberty be, I am ſure it meddles not with civil government, nor civil rights; nor will it bear out any man in reſiſting or oppoſing the ſecular magiſtrates, be they good, or be they bad; be they of the right religion, or of a wrong; be they chriſtians,

or

or be they heathens. Nor will it give any man a title to my eſtate, or my office, or allow him by force or fraud to detain from me what is my due by law, or diſpoſſeſs me of what I am poſſeſſed of, though, as to my perſon, I ſhould be the vileſt wretch upon earth. Nothing makes void a civil right, but a civil law; and my chriſtianity is ſo far from ſetting me above laws, that it ſtrictly enjoins my obedience to them. If chriſtianity is ſo tender of mens civil rights, as that it will not permit a very ſlave to depart out of his maſter's family without his maſter's leave, though his condition there may be well ſuppoſed very hard and uneaſy (as we ſee it is in this chapter, ver. 21.) little can we imagine that any man is warranted by or upon account of the goſpel (nay, though it was for the goſpel's ſake) to diſquiet or diſturb the peace of the nation, to raiſe rebellion, or to abet it; or, in a word, to with-hold or withdraw, either from the public, or from any private perſon, any right or due which nature or law hath veſted in them.

3. If chriſtianity hath made no alteration as to the civil degrees and callings of men, but hath obliged all *to abide in that degree, and to walk in that calling* they are caſt into by the Providence of God; then they are much to be blamed, who, upon pretence of any gifts or powers they are furniſhed with, think it lawful to forſake their ſtation, and uſurp places or offices which they are not lawfully called to. I do not here ſpeak of a man's changing one calling, or one way of living, for another; as for inſtance, when a man cannot do ſo well in one employment to go to another, which is either fitter for his temper, or wherein he hath a fairer proſpect of living more comfortably in the world; this is unqueſtionably lawful, and every man may, in ſuch caſe,

caſe, do as he thinks fit: But I here ſpeak of entring upon places or offices, which either by the laws of the land, or the laws of God, men are not warranted to execute. This, I ſay, is not to be done in any caſe.

And here I have likewiſe reſpect to two wild fanatical principles, which men are apt to take up, which yet, where-ever they are entertained, fail not to fill the ſtate with ſeditions, and the church with ſchiſms in abundance. They are theſe: that where there are abuſes and corruptions in a church or ſtate, there every man hath authority to reform them, though he be not commiſſioned thereto by law, but indeed acts in contradiction to it. The other is, that whoſoever finds himſelf gifted and qualified for the work of the miniſtry, and thinks he may do the church good ſervice in that way, may, without any further call, enter upon that office.

But both theſe are directly contrary to the apoſtle's precept in the text, *Let every man abide in that calling wherein he is called, and ſo I ordain in all churches.* Art thou a private perſon? Thou muſt not take the ſword in thy hand to puniſh malefactors, nor invade a juriſdiction that doth not belong to thee of reforming public abuſes; nay, though thou ſeeſt that the magiſtrate to whom it belongs is negligent herein, and does not perform the truſt committed to him. If things, either in church or ſtate, go not ſo well as they ſhould, thou mayeſt, nay, thou oughteſt, to do all that in thy ſphere thou art capable of doing for the amending them. Thou muſt uſe thy hearty prayers to God, nay, thou mayeſt, if thou pleaſe, modeſtly repreſent thy ſenſe of things to thoſe who are in a more public ſtation, and are more immediately concerned about theſe things; and, in a word, thou mayeſt uſe all honeſt

neſt endeavours that the law of the land allows thee. But ſtill thou art not to trangreſs thy bounds. Thou art not to forget in what capacity thou acteſt. A privateman is not a magiſtrate, and therefore muſt not invade his office. An inferiormagiſtrate is not the ſupreme, and therefore muſt not exceed the limits of his commiſſion. And as for the ſecret whiſpers and impulſes of God's Spirit, which are often pretended for ſuch illegal uſurpations, they are not to be regarded. *God is the God of order, and not of confuſion*, as the apoſtle has told us, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. and therefore all theſe ſuggeſtions and impulſes which tend to confuſion, which, if they be followed, naturally create diſturbance to the public peace, cannot be from God, but are the effects of an over-heated brain, or illuſions of the devil. Beſides, the age which we now live in, is not an age of inſpirations and impulſes: we have a ſtanding and fixed rule to proceed by in all our actions, and that is, the written word of God, and the law of the land. And whatever actions are not warranted or allowed by them, no immediate inſpiration or impulſe can juſtify—And the ſame thing is to be ſaid as to the miniſterial function. A man may have exceeding good parts, and a great talent in ſpeaking: He may have likewiſe attained a conſiderable ſkill in the ſcriptures and other ſorts of learning, and have all the other qualifications which are needful to make him a very uſeful miniſter of the church: But ſtill this alone, without a lawful call, doth not impower him to take that office upon him; nay, he quits his ſtation, and can neither anſwer it to God nor the church, if he does. But is not the very having theſe abilities, and the deſire of making uſe of them, a lawful call without any more? No: He muſt have the call of men too, even the call of

thoſe whom Jeſus Chriſt hath intruſted with the government of the church. If a man do not come in this way, he is not a lawful ſhepherd, but an intruder into Chriſt's flock, whatever natural or acquired abilities he may have to fit him for the employment.

III. But to leave this point, I proceed to the third general head which I propos'd to ſpeak to; which is not indeed directly affirmed or contained in my text, but is rather a neceſſary conſequence from it, viz. That ſince the various circumſtances and callings into which men are diſpoſed, are from God, therefore no man can be juſtified, who lives in ſuch a way, or follows ſuch a courſe of life, as cannot be ſuppoſed to be of God's diſtribution. This, I ſay, is a natural conſequence of my text; and it thus ariſeth: The text implies that every man hath talents and gifts diſtributed to him by God, in order to the fitting him for ſome civil employment or courſe of life. It implies likewiſe, that according to the variety of theſe talents and diſtributions, men are actually diſpoſed into ſeveral callings, and degrees, and conditions, by the providence of God, and in theſe they are to walk, or in theſe they are to exerciſe themſelves. All this is affirmed or implied in my text. Now that which I gather from hence, is, that if any man do not walk, or do not exerciſe himſelf in ſuch a courſe of life, or ſuch a civil employment, as anſwers the ends of God's diſtributions to him, and ſuits with the ſtation and degree he is diſpoſed into by God's Providence, but either follows no calling at all, or, which is worſe, gets his living by an unlawful one; ſuch a perſon, I ſay, doth not walk as God hath diſtributed to him, and therefore his courſe of life is not to be juſtified. Every man therefore muſt have a calling, and every man's calling muſt be of God's di-

ſtribution, viz. it muſt be warranted by the laws of God, and ſuit with the ends for which God hath made his diſtributions, and appointed callings in the world.

To ſpeak more particularly: To the making up of a calling, ſuch as God hath appointed, there ſeem to go theſe three things:

1. That the courſe of life, or the employment that a man pitches upon, be ſuch, as will be ſufficient to exerciſe his diligence and induſtry. If it be not ſuch as will keep him out of idleneſs, it deſerves not the name of a calling: There is nothing ſo contrary to the nature of man, as to let his powers and faculties ruſt for want of employment. Our ſouls, next to the divine and angelical natures, are the moſt active beings in the world. It is true, they are not all equally active in the ſame way, but every one, according to the proper powers which God hath beſtowed upon it, in the natural compoſition of the man; and therefore, though men have not only the liberty, but alſo a neceſſity upon them, to employ themſelves ſeveral ways, yet every one is ſo to employ himſelf, as to keep his faculties in conſtant exerciſe, and to be able to give a good account of his time. And, in truth, if all other things be equal, thoſe are the beſt callings, that a man can follow, in which he hath the largeſt ſphere of activity for the employing his induſtry, and improving his natural gifts and talents; and in which he hath the beſt opportunities of filling up all the vacant interſtices of his time to good purpoſes.

2. Another requiſite of a calling, is, that it be ſuch a courſe of life as doth employ a man's time innocently and lawfully; for otherwiſe, be it never ſo full of buſineſs, it is none of thoſe callings which God hath diſtributed mankind into, and therefore is by no means

to be followed. Well, but what callings are innocent and what are not? I mean not to enter into a diſcourſe of particular callings, or to arraign or paſs ſentence on any one trade or art which is uſed among us: But I only lay down this general rule for the judging of this point, which may be applied to any particulars, as we have occaſion. Any calling that doth, in the nature and deſign of it, either act ſin or encourage it; any calling that doth directly miniſter to vice and wickedneſs of what kind ſoever; that is not an innocent calling; and a man had better be reduced to the extremeſt degree of poverty, than get his living by ſuch a one. But here I deſire it may be taken notice of, that when I ſpeak of miniſtring to vice and ſin, I put in theſe words directly, and in its own nature; for there may be ſeveral callings and profeſſions which do indirectly and by accident miniſter to the vices and ſins of men, which yet, for all that, are not unlawful callings. For inſtance; every body knows that taverns and victualing-houſes, and ſuch like places of entertainment, are often uſed to the purpoſes of intemperance and luxury. But then, I ſay, this exceſs is not a natural conſequence of keeping ſuch houſes, or the thing deſigned by them; but it is a ſubverting the ends for which the law allows them (which ends are the conveniencies of men, and not their debauches;) and therefore theſe are lawful callings notwithſtanding their abuſes. Only it extremely concerns all thoſe who follow ſuch employments, to be as careful as poſſibly they can, not to ſuffer, much leſs to contribute to, ſuch kind of irregularities. And as it is in this kind of life, ſo it is in many others; nay, I may ſay in moſt, by which men get their livings.

3. Another requiſite of an honeſt calling is this, that it

it be of ſome advantage to the public, and not merely for the getting a livelihood. If any man was ſo fooliſh as to give another conſtant wages for picking ſtraws, or catching flies, or doing ſome other ſuch ridiculous and unneceſſary work; I do not think it juſtifiable in that man, who ſhould employ himſelf this way, tho' it was for the getting his bread. Here may indeed be no want of work; the man may take pains enough, ſuch as they be, in this fooliſh way; and I cannot ſee that ſuch an employment doth directly miniſter to vice: But yet here wants ſomething to make it a lawful calling, and that is, uſefulneſs to the public. A man cannot anſwer it to God, nor to the world, for thus employing his time or labour, becauſe he doth no good; he ſerves no end, either of neceſſity or convenience, to mankind; and conſequently lives to no purpoſe. Theſe are indeed ludicrous inſtances which I have given: But for any thing I know, there are ſome employments, about which ſeveral buſy themſelves, which ſerve to as little purpoſe as thoſe which I have now mentioned.—But here again; When we ſay that every calling ought to bring in ſome advantage to the public, to make it an allowable one, my meaning is not to exclude all callings from being lawful ones, which are not of abſolute neceſſity to the life of man. No. I would put no ſcruple into any man's head, who follows a trade or an employment, which is not ſo very neceſſary, but that the world might do well enough without it. For I account even thoſe to be lawful arts or ways of living, which miniſter any way to the convenience, nay even to the ornaments, the delights, the recreations, of mankind; always ſuppoſing that theſe conveniencies, or ornaments, or recreations which they ſerve, to be innocent in themſelves, and no ways repugnant to the rules of the goſpel.

But if they be forbidden recreations, or forbidden ornaments, then that calling which ſerves to them, cannot be a lawful calling. But then, having granted the allowableneſs of theſe callings, becauſe they do in ſome degree bring benefit to the world; (for even to miniſter to the honeſt delights or ornaments of human life, is a benefit:) it is fit that I ſhould add this further, that thoſe callings are always more eligible (and to be preferred) which ſerve the neceſſary ends of human life, than thoſe which miniſter only to its conveniencies; and thoſe which are highly convenient in a commonwealth, before thoſe which only make proviſion for recreations or ornament; for theſe laſt are the loweſt degrees of callings, how gainful ſoever otherwiſe they may be.

Having thus given an account of the nature of callings, and the obligation which all men are under to live in the exerciſe of them, I cannot but make ſome application of what has been ſaid to ſome particular ſorts of people among us.

(1.) It were heartily to be wiſh'd, that the nobility and gentry, and all men of eſtates, would ſeriouſly take an account of themſelves, how they ſtand as to this matter. They, as well as others, are to follow ſome employment, in which they may exerciſe their natural parts, and do ſervice to the world. If they do not, they are, for any thing I know, as great criminals as thoſe vagrants and idle people which the law orders ſhould be ſent to the houſe of correction, to be made to work for their living. It is the moſt ridiculous thing in the world to fanſy, that becauſe a man is honourably born, or hath an eſtate, that therefore he is no ways concerned in the world, but juſt to live after his own mind; and that only the poorer ſort of people

ple are made for labour and care. Why, the greateſt of men are but the ſtewards of God's bleſſings, and are as accountable to him for them, as the pooreſt; and the more talents they have, the more diligent ought they to be in employing theſe talents to their Lord's advantage. Well; but what is the calling or employment which perſons of this quality, we are ſpeaking of, are to follow? To which I anſwer, That whatever their calling be, I am ſure it is not merely to contrive for their pleaſures and diverſions, and to fill up their whole time in paſſing from one delight and recreation to another. They have more to do within doors, than to eat and drink neatly and modiſhly, to ſleep and dreſs, to receive viſits, and read romances. And they have more to do without doors, than to go about telling of news, paying of compliments, viſiting the theatres, and meeting at clubs. And yet, as the world now goes, for a gentleman to ſpend his whole time in theſe kind of things, is accounted a very innocent way of living; and they want not the reputation of ſober and virtuous perſons, who employ themſelves no worſe. And I muſt confeſs that this may be called indeed virtue, in compariſon of that wicked courſe of life which others are engaged in, who ſpend their days and their nights in revelling and drunkenneſs, in ſwearing and burleſquing religion, in purſuing unlawful amours, and all kind of debauchery—O! who would take pains to get an eſtate to have it thus ſpent! What ſober man would not deſire a thouſand times rather to ſee his ſon an honeſt induſtrious ploughman or mechanic, than to ſee him the ſpruceſt, the wittieſt, the wealthieſt gentleman of the age, and to live at this rate? O what will theſe men ſay for themſelves, when the impartial judge of the world comes to enter into a

ſtrict account with them, not only for their time which they have had in common with others, but for theſe extraordinary advantages of birth, wit, education and fortune, which they had above other men! Nay, how will they anſwer for this courſe of life to their country, which might expect great matters from them? For they ſhould be the prime ſtay and ſupport of the kingdom where they live; the great examples, and encouragers and patrons of all virtue, and induſtry, and ingenuity; whereas, as they have ordered the matter, they do little or no good at all to the public, unleſs perhaps by accident, to thoſe who raiſe benefit to themſelves out of their folly: Nay, ſo far are they from doing good to the public, that by their diſſolute converſation they do a great deal of harm. And the only end which thoſe advantages, which they have above others, ſerve to, is to put them into a capacity of doing more miſchief; of being greater burdens and diſeaſes to the nation, than they could have been without thoſe advantages. But what is all this ſaid for? To reproach the gentry, and thoſe who have eſtates? God forbid that it ſhould the leaſt enter into my heart; but to awaken and rouze thoſe who live idly and unprofitably, and to ſet them upon ſerious thoughts, and ſerviceable employments. That they may live like themſelves, be the honour and the ornament, as well as the defence and ſecurity of the nation: That they may put themſelves into a capacity of ſerving their king and their country, as well in peace as in war: That they be uſeful to all who are under them, and all who are about them, in other ways than by ſpending their money among them: That they be hearty lovers of God, and of his true religion, and patterns of loyalty, ſobri-

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ety and godlineſs to all thoſe to whom the influence of their example doth extend.

(2.) But there is another particular, to which I deſire to make application of the general doctrine of callings, which I have been inſiſting on. And I do it the rather, becauſe I am afraid the age we live in doth too much need it: It is the buſineſs of gaming. I ſhould be loth to ſay that all gaming is, ſimply and in itſelf, unlawful, or that even a ſerious chriſtian may not ſometimes, and at ſome ſeaſons, uſe the common games for the relaxation of his mind, and obliging and diverting his company. No certainly; ſo long as play is uſed only as a recreation, it is allowable; and the reaſon is, becauſe there is no law of God or man that doth forbid it. And if it be not forbid by a law, the uſe of it cannot be unlawful. But then every ſober man is to take care that this liberty be uſed with great prudence and caution, viz. that he do not let it exceed the bounds of an innocent recreation: for inſtance, that he do not ſet his affections too much upon it, or play with ſuch concern as to be put into a paſſion at his bad ſucceſs; that he ſits not too long at it, nor comes to it too frequently; that he always prefers his neceſſary buſineſs before his divertiſements; that he ſo order his recreations of this kind, as that they render him the more fit to ſpend his other time the more uſefully; and laſtly, that he play not for money, but diverſion; at leaſt for no more money than what he can very well loſe without the leaſt diſcompoſure of mind, and without the leaſt prejudice to his family or eſtate. And it muſt be leſs too than he is willing to give upon a good occaſion, and leſs than he doth oftentimes beſtow upon objects of charity: And laſtly, when he does play for ſuch little ſums, it muſt be rather for the in-

creaſing his diverſion, or the better entertainment of his friends, than for the ſake of augmenting his ſtock.

Thus far I ſay, and with theſe reſtrictions, to uſe play is innocent enough. But here is the miſery: There is a ſort of men who even make a trade of gaming; it is their conſtant employment, whenſoever they can find out company to their purpoſe; and they venture great ſums at it, even ſuch as may endanger their whole fortune, if they ſhould prove loſers. It is not their diverſion, but their ſerious buſineſs; and they purſue it as induſtriouſly, as other men do their neceſſary callings. And to ſome indeed, this is their only livelihood; for they have no other way of getting bread for themſelves and their families. But this whole thing, as thus practiſed, is ſtark naught, and abominable both in thoſe who have eſtates and in thoſe who have none. And whoſoever makes this his way of living, has a ſad account to make to God Almighty.

It is one requiſite of a lawful calling (as has been already ſhewn) that it be ſufficient to employ a man's time and his talents in a way ſuitable to the ends for which they were given him. But can there be a worſe conſumption of our time, or a greater abuſe of our talents, than to put both of them to no greater uſe than throwing a dye, or turning a pack of cards? To make any calling lawful, it is required that it ſhould not miniſter in its own nature to ſin and impiety. But what doth more naturally miniſter to theſe purpoſes, than this way of gaming we are ſpeaking of: Or what doth more effectually tend to engage a man in all ſorts of crimes and immoralities? Of this we need no greater evidence than the undecent and impetuous paſſions of all ſorts, the execrable oaths, and imprecations, the lies, and cheats, and couſenages, and brutiſh quarrels and

and conteſts, that do inſeparably attend the trade of gaming.

But further, What benefit, or what advantage, doth from hence redound to mankind? (for that is another thing we ought to be ſatisfied in before we pronounce any courſe of life to be lawful) Why, if the gameſters will be concluded by this, they are certainly caſt; for there is nothing of good, I mean of public good, can poſſibly come from this trade of theirs; but on the contrary, abundance of evil of all kinds; and that not by accident, or through the miſcarriage of a particular perſon, here or there, but by direct and neceſſary conſequence of the thing itſelf. How many men are undone for ever in their morals, by being once dipp'd and initiated in this infernal myſtery? And as if damning their ſouls were not enough, how many thouſand eſtates have been broken and ruined? How many families, wives and children hath it reduced to the extremeſt degree of poverty and contempt? Nay, what more expeditious method hath ever been found out to bring a man to an untimely end; whether by poiſon, or a quarrel, or the gallows? In a word, the thing is ſo deſperate a venture, that whoſoever is once deeply engaged in it, there is little hopes of his ever coming off without a grievous wound, either in his conſcience or in his eſtate, if it be his good luck to eſcape utter deſtruction.

And after all, pray what is the advantage men propoſe to themſelves in running ſuch riſques as theſe? What is it which makes them venture ſo deſperately? Is it that it is great and genteel to game high? Why, among all men, who either have wiſdom or ſobriety, or who love their eſtates, this is exploded as the moſt unaccountable madneſs in the world. Is it the pleaſure

of gaming which tempts them? Why that is every whit as much gratified by playing for nothing, or for trifling ſums, as if they ſtak'd their eſtates, their wives and children. Well then it muſt only be the covetouſneſs of money that makes them venture ſo deep. This, I believe, is true, generally ſpeaking. But then it were well if they would conſider how wretchedly they defeat that deſire of money, if it ſhould be their fortune to loſe what they play for, and how miſerable they muſt needs be thereupon. But perhaps they think not of this; their thoughts are wholly taken up with the hopes of winning. Why let it be ſo; and ſuppoſe they have that luck and ſucceſs they wiſh and hope for, are they ever a whit the richer for this? Is their ſtock in the leaſt increaſed by what they win at play? A great many wiſe men will ſay, No. For they ſay that all gain which accrues by play, is unlawful gain, and ought either to be refunded to the party it is gained from, or to be given in charity, or to public uſes; but by no means to be put into a man's ſtock, leſt the unlawful mixture ſhould corrupt the maſs of what is lawfully gotten, and make it unproſperous to the poſſeſſor, as it is often ſeen in the courſe of the world. And this is not ſaid altogether without reaſon; for indeed it will be hard for the wittieſt of the gameſters to make out a lawful title to any conſiderable ſum which he wins by play, tho' he win it never ſo fairly. As for little petty ſums which men ſtake for their diverſion, and the one is as willing to loſe as the other to win, and where no damage accrues to the party by the loſs, theſe have a quite different conſideration. But as for great ſums, wherein a man is, or ought to be, concerned, it is not ſo clear that they are lawful gain, or that a man can, with a good conſcience, take them, or keep them, let them

them be never ſo fairly won. For in all dealings between man and man, that gain is only accounted lawful, for which there is a valuable conſideration. A tradeſman ought not to take his cuſtomer's money, unleſs he afford him commodities to the worth of it; nor ought any man to make a gain of another, unleſs he either do ſomething, or give ſomething, that bears ſome proportion, or makes ſome compenſation for the gain he makes of him. This is the ſtanding rule of juſtice and equity in all dealings between man and man. In every lawful gain there is a valuable conſideration. But now, in the gain which accrues to a man by play, there is no ſuch conſideration: Nay, ſo far from that, that a man cannot be a gainer in that way, but the other whom he deals with, or who is concerned with him, muſt of neceſſity be as much a loſer. Now ſurely, that cannot be a juſt or allowable way of getting, which is perpetually and directly to the hurt and loſs of another man. Nor is this the ſenſe only of two or three nice and ſevere caſuiſts, but of the wiſeſt and and beſt men of all ages and all religions. 'Twas the old Roman law, that all the money which gameſters won, ſhould be taken from them, and employ'd upon public works, as being unlawfully gotten by them. Ariſtotle accounts, that the profit which a man gets by the dice, and the purchaces that a thief makes upon the highway, are to be ranked equally among the unlawful gains. And St. Auguſtine tells us, *Bona aleâ amiſſa, tanquam furto ablata, veteres reſtituenda putabant, viz.* The antients were of opinion, that money won by dice, or at tables, *&c.* ought to be reſtored like money that was ſtolen.

I am ſenſible it will be a hard matter to perſuade all men of the truth of this. But however, I cannot but lay

lay before them what the ſenſe of wiſe and good men has been concerning this affair. And whether all will believe this or no, I hope all ſober perſons, who are either concerned for their happineſs in this world, or ſalvation in the next, and who have any regard either for their eſtates, or families, or reputations, will keep out of this ungodly courſe of gaming, and will ſeriouſly apply themſelves to ſuch ways of living, wherein they may be ſerviceable to their families, to their country, and to the church of God; adorning their profeſſion by a holy and unblameable life, that ſo their ſouls may be ſaved in the world to come.

DIS-

DISCOURSE V.

Of diligence and watchfulneſs in our chriſtian calling. How our time is to be ſpent, and our leiſure improved, to uſeful purpoſes. And particularly what wiſdom and prudence chriſtians are to uſe in evil and dangerous times.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

EPHÉS. V. 15, 16.

See then that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.

THIS *circumſpect walking* which is here recommended, and *redeeming the time*, which is laid down as an inſtance of it, may be interpreted two ways:

1ſt, It may either imply great diligence and watchfulneſs in proſecuting the work of our chriſtianity in general,

general, and in order thereto, that we improve our time to the beſt advantage, ſpending as little of it idly as is poſſible; or,

2dly, It may imply prudence, and caution, and diſcretion in the management of ourſelves and our affairs with reference to this world, eſpecially in times of difficulty and danger; that by this means we may gain time to ourſelves, and avoid the miſchiefs that the evil days threaten us with.

Each of theſe interpretations, as it hath good authority on its ſide, ſo doth it likewiſe afford us uſeful inſtructions; and therefore I ſhall reject neither of them, but in treating upon this text ſhall take them both in, beginning with the interpretation firſt mentioned.

St. Paul, in the former part of this chapter, is evidently exhorting the Epheſians, that laying aſide all wickedneſs and ſenſuality, they would live a holy and a pure life; and he doth it from this conſideration, that *they had been ſometime darkneſs, but now were light in the Lord*; therefore they ought to *walk as children of light*, ver. 8. They were heretofore in a heathen ſtate, but now the light of the goſpel did ſhine forth to them; and therefore it was an infinite reproach to them if they did any longer purſue the unfruitful works of darkneſs. Wherefore (as the apoſtle goes on in the words before my text) *The Spirit of God ſaith, Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light*, ver. 14. And then comes my text, *See then that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwiſe, but underſtanding what the will of the Lord is*, ver. 15, 16, 17. As much as to ſay, it is the will of the Lord that ye ſhould awake

wake from the ſleep of ſin; that ye ſhould ariſe from eath to life; that ye ſhould mortify your evil habits nd corrupt affections, which have ſo long enthrall'd you; nd live from henceforward a holy and a ſpiritual life. This it is to which ye are called, and obliged by the ;oſpel. It therefore infinitely concerns you to look bout you, to be very watchful of your own actions, o be circumſpect in all your behaviour, to redeem the ime paſt, which you have ſpent in vanity, by improving the time preſent to the beſt purpoſes, nay to catch at all opportunities of advancing in virtue and goodneſs. (This is the meaning of redeeming or purchaſing the time that is here mentioned). And ſo much the rather, becauſe it is an evil and dangerous world ye live in. Ye have a great many enemies to conflict with; ye have a torrent of bad examples and cuſtoms to ſtruggle with; ye are ſurrounded with temptations of all ſorts; ſo that unleſs ye be wonderfully careful of your own conduct, and watchful over your enemies, you are in great danger to be run down, and loſe all the fruits and rewards of your taking upon yourſelves the profeſſion of chriſtianity.

This is the account which ſome of the interpreters give of this paſſage. Now taking St. Paul's precept of *walking circumſpectly* in this ſenſe, it contains in it theſe following duties, or will oblige us to theſe following particulars:

1. Firſt of all we muſt look narrowly to our hearts, that is to ſay, to our purpoſes and intentions. Whoever means to *walk circumſpectly*, muſt above all things, take care of his deſigns, that they be well fixed and ſettled. If a man live at random, having no principles to act by, no ſteady aims or purpoſes to purſue, he is unprovided of all defence, and expoſed to the aſſaults

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of every temptation that comes in his way. I cannot ſay that his guard is eaſily broken, for he has no guard at all, but is like a ſhip without a rudder, carried away with every wind; like a houſe without lock or bars, a ready prey to the firſt enemy that ſhall attack him. If therefore we mean to live to any purpoſes of religion, it is abſolutely neceſſary that we ſhould in the firſt place, look carefully to our hearts, ſo as to keep them always in a good frame and diſpoſition. My meaning is, that we ſo fix our aims and deſigns, as that it ſhall be the conſtant unchangeable principle of our minds, and the great buſineſs we propoſe to ourſelves throughout the whole courſe of our lives, to endeavour to approve ourſelves to God in our whole converſation. Whatever other projects we may have in our heads, yet to make it our firſt and chief care to pleaſe God in every action we do, and for no conſideration in the world to violate our duty, or make our conſcience uneaſy. This that I now ſay is not only an inſtance of *circumſpect walking*, but the very foundation of it. If we would *walk not as fools, but as wiſe*, we muſt lay the firſt ſtep here, for it is *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom*, as Solomon tells us, Prov. ix. 10.——And without doubt this is that which he adviſeth in another place, where he ſaith, *My ſon keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of that are the iſſues of life*, ib. iv. 23. Thine heart: What is that but thy deſigns, thy purpoſes, thy intentions, which are the ſprings and principles from which thy actions flow? If theſe be well fixed; if theſe be guarded and preſerved pure and ſincere, they will produce ſuch a converſation, as will end in eternal life; but otherwiſe, the iſſues of them will be death.

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2. But

2. But ſecondly, another inſtance of circumſpection, is to examine carefully every action before we engage in it. The circumſpect man will not venture upon things hand over head, but firſt conſiders and weighs the matter that is before him. And always his firſt enquiry is, whether the thing be lawful, whether it be conſiſtent with his duty; and if it be not, he will by no means engage in it: Nay, though it be lawful, if it be not alſo expedient, (which is the next thing he conſiders) that very conſideration is enough to make him forbear the action. It is not the company he is engaged in, nor the ſollicitation of his friends, nor his preſent inclination or humour, nor the heat of a paſſion, nor the ſerving of any intereſt; I ſay, none of theſe things will ſway him; but he will examine both his own conſcience, and the fitneſs or unfitneſs of the action; nay, he will take a view as far he can of all the conſequences that will follow upon it, and what influence it will have upon his own ſpiritual good, or the good of others, before he will venture upon it. Eaſy, and weak, and careleſs perſons are drawn to do any thing that is preſented to them under fair colours, but thoſe who are circumſpect, will examine all the colours, by putting them into ſeveral lights. The very notion of circumſpection is to look round, and to view, and conſider every thing in all its ſeveral ſhapes, and reſpects, and tendencies. And if we would make it our practice thus to look before us, thus to ſcan and examine our actions before we engaged in them, how happy, how good, how virtuous might we be? How many ſins ſhould we avoid, that we are now daily ſurprized into? How many temptations might we overcome, that now daily lead us captive? But, alas! here is our miſery, we ruſh into actions upon a preſent heat

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and *impetus* without much thinking or conſidering; and hence it comes to paſs that we are betray'd into a thouſand follies and ſins, which afterwards we have too juſt cauſe to repent of. If we did but uſe to look before us, we ſhould rarely miſcarry. *Ponder the paths of thy feet*, ſays Solomon, *and then all thy ways ſhall be ordered aright*, Prov. iv. 26.

3. Another inſtance which this precept of circumſpect walking will oblige us to, is to be careful to put a ſtop to the firſt beginnings of evils that we feel in ourſelves. All our ſins do ariſe from ſome paſſion or appetite that is within us, which commonly is excited and takes fire at ſome external object, and from hence grows unreaſonable and extravagant; and there begins the ſin. Now it is pretty much in our power, if we have uſed our minds to think, and are not ſtrangers to our own humours and conſtitutions; I ſay, it is very much in our power to ſtop the beginnings or the firſt motions of any irregular paſſions or appetites; I mean ſo far, as that it ſhall not proceed to a criminal action; nay, not ſo far as to obtain a full conſent of the will. For before it comes to that, reaſon may interpoſe; and if we cannot vanquiſh the deſire or the paſſion by arguments, yet we may ſtifle it eaſily, by diverting our thoughts to other objects. But if we once give way to it, and do not preſently ſuppreſs it, it is a hundred to one it grows too ſtrong for us, and doth produce its effects in our outward actions, though much to our ſorrow and repentance afterwards. It is here juſt as in any combuſtible matter which is ſet on fire: If we take the flame preſently, it is ſoon extinguiſhed; but give it a little ſcope, and it proves often beyond your power to quench it till it hath done miſchief. Here therefore will lie a great part of the chriſtian circumſpection

pection that is required of us, *viz.* to attend carefully o the firſt motions and inclinations that are excited in ur hearts by any object or occaſion that happens to e preſented to us; and if we find them irregular, and ending to ſin, by all means to put an immediate ſtop o them. If we take this method, it is impoſſible we ould fall into any grievous or preſumptuous ſin: nd tho' we may be guilty of many faults and infirmi-es, yet we ſhall not be capable of doing any thing hat ſhall much wound our conſcience, or forfeit our itle to God's favour.

4. Another inſtance wherein this vigilance and cir-umſpection that is here recommended by the apoſtle be exerciſed, is this; we ſhould never in this world pprehend ourſelves free from danger, but live in con-tant expectation of being aſſaulted by our ſpiritual nemies; and upon that conſideration we ſhould al-vays be upon our guard. We are never ſo ſecure, ut that we may be in danger the next moment. How often are we drawn away to that which is evil, ven then when we did not in the leaſt dream of any uch matter. Temptations are always ready at hand, o long as we carry theſe mortal bodies about us. There s nothing ſo innocent, but it may, and often doth, rove a ſnare to us. Our buſineſs, our company, our leareſt relations, nay, our very meat and drink, as ne-ceſſary as theſe things are, yet do they oftentimes prove great temptations to ſin. And if we are thus tempted when we are moſt at our own command, what temp-ations muſt we expect in our other converſations and entanglements with a buſy, deſigning, and yet a ma-icious and a wicked world. Yet ſuch is the lot and por-ion of all of us, that whether we will or no, we ſhall e engaged in ſome troubleſome and dangerous adven-tures.

tures. It concerns us all therefore, as much as the frailty of human nature will allow us, always to keep a ſtrict guard over ourſelves, to look to our ſenſes, to look to our tongues, to look to our appetites, and to watch over all our actions. *We muſt* (as the apoſtle exhorts) *ſtand with our loins girt about, having on the whole armour of God*, Eph. vi. 14. Our Saviour tells us, *That if the good man of the houſe had known at what hour the thief would have come, he would have watched, and not ſuffered his houſe to be broken through*, Mat. xxiv. 43. The application he makes of that parable concerns us as much as thoſe to whom he ſpoke it, viz. *What I ſay unto you I ſay unto all, watch*, Mark xiii. 37.

Thus I have given an account of all the particulars of that circumſpection that is required of us in the text, in the ſenſe in which I am now treating of it; ſo far, I mean, as I could collect them from the general words. But there is one particular of this circumſpect walking yet behind, which I think I ought not only to take notice of, but inſiſt a little more upon than I have done upon the reſt, both becauſe the apoſtle hath in the text particularly mentioned it, and likewiſe becauſe it is of ſuch importance, that if it be not taken care of, all that has been ſaid about circumſpect walking will ſignify nothing.

The thing that I mean, is *redeeming our time: ſee that ye walk circumſpectly*, &c. *redeeming the time.* Whether you will take this as an inſtance of our walking circumſpectly, or as a means to ſecure our ſo walking, is to me an indifferent matter. But I am ſure it is not indifferent, but abſolutelly neceſſary, that men ſhould be ſeriouſly called upon to put it in practice. This therefore ſhall make the ſecond part of my diſcourſe.

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Redeeming the time in the ſenſe that we are now ſpeaking of it, (for as to the other ſenſe of the phraſe, as it imports the gaining of time, it doth not yet come under conſideration) I ſay, *redeeming of time* may be underſtood two ways, either with reſpect to the time paſt, or the time preſent. To redeem time paſt, is to make amends for our former careleſsneſs and negligence in any work we were engaged in, by uſing double diligence in that work afterwards. Thus a traveller may be ſaid to redeem his time, who, having loiter'd a whole day in an inn without making any progreſs in his journey, doth the next day go a double ſtage, performing the journey both of that day and of the day before.

Now in this ſenſe of the phraſe, redeeming the time is a duty that doth highly concern us; all thoſe of us I mean, who have lived looſely or viciouſly the former part of their lives. If ever ſuch perſons come to be ſerious, and to take wiſe counſels, they muſt endeavour to recover all that time they have miſ-ſpent by a more than ordinary diligence for the time to come. The farther they are gone in any evil courſe, the more ſeverely muſt they exact of themſelves the practice of the contrary virtues. They muſt not ſit down content with the ordinary degrees of virtue and goodneſs, which would be indeed commendable in a young beginner; but they muſt labour to be ſo good, and ſo abundant in the work of the Lord, as, if they had not gone aſtray, they might have been preſumed at this time to have been according to the ordinary rates of mens progreſs in virtue. This is to redeem the time paſt.

But though this be a very uſeful ſenſe, and indeed that which our Engliſh phraſe of redeeming the time doth

doth moſt properly import; yet, as I take it, this was not the ſenſe St. Paul muſt be ſuppoſed principally to have deſigned, when he uſed this expreſſion; and therefore I ſhall purſue this notion of it no further.

Redeeming the time in the apoſtle's ſenſe muſt have reſpect chiefly to the time preſent. The words which he uſes are ἐξαγοραζόμενοι καίρον, which, if we would render ſtrictly and properly, are as much as if we ſhould ſay, buying or purchaſing the time or the ſeaſon. So that his meaning is, we are to value time extremely, and to purchaſe it at any rate, though it be with the loſs of our pleaſures, or conveniencies, or any other thing that the fleſhly principle within us is moſt delighted with. We chriſtians muſt act in our ſpiritual concerns, as merchants and tradeſmen do in their temporal, who let ſlip no time, no ſeaſon, no opportunity of improving their eſtates, and making a good bargain for themſelves; but prefer the gain of their trade above all the little deſigns of eaſe, or good company, or the like. Now taking this to be the meaning of *redeeming of time*, there are three things which the duty will oblige us to:

1. To take care that we employ our time, and that we employ it innocently. And this indeed is the loweſt degree of *redeeming our time*.

2. A ſtep higher than this, to increaſe and improve our time, by cutting off, as much as in us lies, all unneceſſary conſumptions of it.

3. And which is yet a further degree of *redeeming time*, to improve all that time which we have gained to ourſelves by the retrenching our ſuperfluous expences of it, to the beſt and nobleſt purpoſes we can put it to.

I ſhall conſider theſe particulars a little more diſtinctly and carefully.

1. The

1. The first and lowest instance of care that this duty of redeeming our time will put us upon, is, that we employ our time, and that we employ it innocently. We are at no hand to pass away our time in idleness, but constantly to find some work for ourselves. For any man at any time to be able to say of himself, I have nothing to do; if he means thereby that he knows not how to employ his next hour, is a certain argument that the man is either a very silly or a very dissolute person. If it comes to that pass with us that our time lies upon our hands, and we know not what to do with it, but are longing and wishing that this or the other good hour would come when we shall meet with something whereby we hope to gratify ourselves, things are in a marvellous bad posture with us. We ought to flee idleness, as we would the worst disease; not only because it renders a man's life burthensome and uneasy, nay, I may say, a very torment to himself, but because it is very mischievous and very criminal. It is that which makes a man perfectly useless in the world, and he lives to no other purpose than, cormorant-like, to devour the fruits of the earth. It is the infallible way to spoil all that briskness of temper, that vigour of constitution, and quickness of parts, that God hath given him, and to make him sottish and stupid. It is the inlet to temptations of all sorts, and the occasion of most of those misadventures that befal us in this life. The devil never wants baits for such kind of people, and however they be applied, 'tis odds but they succeed, and the man is caught. And besides all this, idleness is a great sin in itself: It is one of those three sins that brought fire and brimstone upon Sodom, as the prophet tells us; and therefore surely it is not an ordinary malignity that is in it. Our time is one of the most pre-

cious talents that God has intrusted us with, and in this respect more precious than any of the rest, that it is only ours for the present, and gone the next moment; so that whatever portions of it we lose in idleness, are impossible to be retrieved by us; whereas we cannot say that there is such a flux in the other blessings we enjoy.

I wish this matter was seriously considered by all of us. We should not then have among us so many, who are at such a loss how to pass away their time; who are so cloy'd with it, that they know not what to do with themselves for many periods of their life, and could be content to be in a state of perfect insensibility during those intervals.——But it will be said, Why do you blame these persons? For they have really nothing to do, they have no employments to follow, they are not under the sad circumstances of being necessitated to drudge and take pains for the getting a livelihood. But is this a sufficient excuse for their being idle? Has not every man in the world work enough to employ himself about all the days of his life, though his life were twice as long as it is? Hath he not a soul to save, and will not securing that concernment put him upon daily study and exercise? Is he not a member of a society, and accordingly is bound to improve all his faculties as much as they are capable, for the doing good to his family, to his country, and to the kingdom where he lives? Hath he not a trust to manage with reference to himself, and is bound, as he will answer to God, to make the best improvement he can of those talents of wit and reason, and other endowments, that his Lord hath bestowed upon him? Are there not every day opportunities put into his hands, which if he will lay hold of, he may either do good to others, or to himself?

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We may pleaſe ourſelves with idle fancies as much as we think good: But the time of our life is rather too ſhort than too long for the work we have to do in it. And though we have been ſo good huſbands of our life, as to have ſecured our main concernment, yet it is impoſſible we ſhould have any time left, which we may not employ to very good purpoſes: Nay, there is none among us that need to throw away an hour idly, who can either think or meditate, or who can read, diſcourſe or work, or is fit to keep company, or manage any buſineſs, either within or without doors; or who hath any ſenſe of devotion, or hath any ſkill in any art that is ingenious or ornamental, or can do any thing that is praiſe-worthy and acceptable to mankind. If there be any who have none of theſe qualifications, let them be idle, and paſs away all their days in ſleep, if they think fit; but God help all ſuch as are in ſuch circumſtances, for in truth they are very miſerable.

But there is another thing to be conſidered under this head. As every one is to take care that he employ his time, ſo he muſt alſo take care that he employ it innocently. As he is not to ſpend it idly, much leſs is he to ſpend it viciouſly; for this is worſe than the former, or, to ſpeak more properly, it is a purſuance of a bad principle to its worſt conſequences. We had better do nothing, though that be bad enough, than do an ill thing. And yet, God knows, this we are often too prone to. In order to avoid one extreme, we are apt to run into another. Rather than ſit idle, which is a thing that the heat and briſkneſs of our tempers has a natural averſion to, we will be doing the devil's work, and helping forwards to our own and other peoples undoing. For truly, no better do ſome among us employ themſelves. We hate to ſit

ſtill: We muſt buſy ourſelves ſome way or other. This is very well: But yet if our buſineſs be to ſpend the time in good fellowſhip, as we call it, in drinking and revelling, to the prejudice of our health, and the inconvenience of our families, and the unfitting ourſelves for the performance of thoſe duties which our ſtation in the world requires of us: If our buſineſs be to proſecute any deſign or intrigue of luſt or wantonneſs, or any ways making proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the unlawful deſires of it: If our buſineſs be to go about as tattlers and buſybodies in other mens matters, telling ſtories of this or the other perſon, and making ourſelves pleaſant at their charge: If our buſineſs be to game and play, or, which is as bad, to deſign the over-reaching of others, and making a gain of them to ourſelves in any other, tho' the more ſerious way: Laſtly, If we buſy ourſelves in any thing that doth not become a chriſtian, that is contrary to that innocence and purity which the goſpel requires of us; in all theſe inſtances we had much better have been doing nothing. This kind of buſineſs is worſe than idleneſs, and we are ſo far from well huſbanding our time, that we have have the ſevereſt account to make for it that is poſſible.

2. But ſecondly, If we would *redeem our time*, it is not enough that we be not idle, or ill employed, but we muſt alſo make as much as we can of our ſtock of time, by cutting off from it all thoſe unneceſſary conſumptions, in which we are often too laviſh of it.

It would make moſt of us (nay, even thoſe among us, who are not addicted to any great vices) very melancholy to ſit down, and ſeriouſly conſider in what way the greateſt part of our time is ſpent. As things commonly go, one half of it, very near, if not altogether,

ther, is taken up in eating, and drinking, and sleeping. And of the other half, how much of it goes in little impertinent affairs, in idle chat and talk when we are in company, in vain and foolish thoughts and fancies when we are alone, in paying or receiving visits from our acquaintance, in divertisements and recreations, and the like? So that in truth it is but a very little portion of time that most persons (even they who cannot be said to be vicious livers) can give a good account of, as having employed it to any really useful purposes.

I do not deny but there is a time to be allowed for all these things, for they are in their degree and in their season very necessary, or at least very convenient. Without some of them we cannot live; and without others we cannot live so comfortably, or so decently. But this is that we complain of, that the custom of the world, and our own evil habits, have introduced unreasonable and extravagant expences of our time upon these things. Nature is certainly contented with a moderate portion of sleep; and health will be as well, or better, preserved, though we do not sit hours at meals, or so frequently engage ourselves in tippling and impertinent conversation. A very little time will serve to apparel us decently; and we may divert ourselves, and enjoy our friends, and perform the necessary civilities we are obliged to, without making it a sort of an employment. In this therefore will consist a main point of our good husbandry as to our time, viz. to cut off as much of it as we can from these kind of things, to be employed in more serious and profitable ways.

3. And that indeed is the third and the highest degree of *redeeming our time*, viz. that we study to improve

all that time we have gained to ourſelves by the retrenching our ſuperfluous expences of it, to the beſt and nobleſt purpoſes we can put it to.

And truly here lies our main buſineſs, if we would effectually *redeem the time*. We muſt be careful not only to ſpend it innocently, but alſo uſefully, either to ourſelves or others, that being the great end our time was given us for, and the great buſineſs we have to purſue in this world. I confeſs indeed ſuch is the infelicity of ſome perſons, that they know not well how to ſpend a day to good purpoſes. But for this they may thank either their bad education, or their own careleſsneſs. There is no body, of what kind of parts or qualities ſoever, but is capable of becoming very uſeful, and, I may ſay excellent, in ſome way or other, if either their parents would look well to their genius, and ſuit their education to it; or themſelves, after they are come to years of diſcretion, would obſerve what they are fitted for, and lay out themſelves accordingly.

To give particular inſtructions or directions in this matter that may reach every body's caſe, is more than I can do, or if I could do it, is more than I ſhould have time for now. But two general points I may lay down, which I am ſure all perſons, let them be of what rank, or degree, or condition ſoever they will, are deeply concerned in.

(1.) The firſt is, that they mind ſeriouſly the work of religion, and the worſhip of God. This is their greateſt concernment of all, ſince both their happineſs in this life and in the next depends upon it. So that they may be abſolutely certain, that whatever time they beſtow upon this affair is well ſpent, and they will never repent it. Is it not infinitely fit and reaſonable, that

that He who gave us all our time, ſhould have ſome daily portion of it devoted to him? Eſpecially conſidering that the time thus improved, brings in both the greateſt pleaſure, and peace, and profit, to ourſelves, that we can poſſibly reap in any way of ſpending it. Let us therefore at all times be ſure to attend to our ſpiritual concernments, whatever other buſineſs we neglect. Let us take time for meditation, and examining the ſtate of our ſouls, and fixing our good purpoſes and reſolutions to ſerve God faithfully all the days of our lives. Let us take time for reading the ſcriptures and other good books, and informing ourſelves in every branch of our duty, and the motives and encouragements we have to put it in practice. Let us take time for devotion, for praiſing God for his mercies, for contemplating his excellencies, for imploring his continual grace and aſſiſtance, for expreſſing acts of repentance for our paſt follies, and dedicating ourſelves anew to our Maker. Theſe are truly profitable and gainful exerciſes, and ſo much the more to be recommended, becauſe they are natural and eaſy: every one is capable of employing himſelf in theſe things: they require no learning, nor ſkill, nor parts; nothing in the world but an honeſt heart. Let every one therefore, who would huſband his time well, ſet out a conſtant portion of it to be ſpent in theſe works, either more or leſs, as his condition and way of living is. The more time he has at his command, the greater portion of it he ought to devote to pious uſes. And if he have but little to ſpare from his other neceſſary employments, yet let that little however be given to God, and the concernments of the ſoul.

(2.) But ſecondly, would we ſpend our time to the beſt purpoſe? Then let us be ſure to mind our callings;

and that not only out of worldly conſiderations, (tho' thoſe be very allowable motives and incitements to a man's diligence in any thing he undertakes) but alſo out of conſcience. For really to be induſtrious in the purſuit of our vocations, not to be ſlothful in buſineſs, is a duty we owe to God as well as to ourſelves; and the neglect of it is a great ſin. A careful and laborious proſecution of a lawful calling in an honeſt way, is not only a means of thriving in the world, and a means to ſecure us from thoſe temptations to vice and wickedneſs to which ſlothful perſons are expoſed; but it is alſo an act of religion, and that which doth recommend us to God, and procure his bleſſing upon us. Nor doth this point only concern mechanics and tradeſmen, or magiſtrates and thoſe who are in any office or fixed employment, (all which have callings properly ſo ſtiled) but alſo all other men, of what rank ſoever, though, by reaſon of their quality and eſtate, they ſit ſo looſe from the world, as not to be engaged in any particular vocation. Yet theſe men have their callings too, which they are bound to attend. Beſides the offices and duties of religion which they, above all others, (as having the greateſt opportunities) are to charge themſelves with the ſtricteſt obſervance of, it is fit, nay it is neceſſary, they ſhould propoſe to themſelves ſome uſeful and commendable deſigns to purſue in the courſe of their lives, which is to be their calling and employment. They have great advantages above other men, both for the improving their minds, and for the doing good in their generation. And they may be aſſured thoſe talents, thoſe advantages, ſhall one day be ſeverely accounted for; and woe be to them, if they *have hid their talent in a napkin.* They who have wealth, or power, or intereſt in the world, do much more

more influence the affairs of the public, than meaner perſons. And oftentimes, upon their carriage and behaviour, the good of the whole neighbourhood, and in proportion the fortune of the kingdom, doth much depend; and therefore they are eſpecially concerned to be careful and prudent in the government of their lives, and induſtriouſly to apply themſelves to all praiſe-worthy things which make for the public benefit. They have really a great work to do, if they would well conſider it; for beſides, that they are obliged to be patterns to all others who are about them, and depend upon them, ſetting them examples of religion, ſobriety, humility, modeſty, bounty, and charity: and beſides, that they have greater revenues and larger eſtates to manage, and greater families to take care of, both as to ſoul and body, which will take up ſome part of their thoughts and time; and beſides, the many temptations to idleneſs and luxury, to pride and vanity, that their fortunes will expoſe them to, which will require a conſtant watchfulneſs to reſiſt, and a great deal of pains to overcome: And laſtly, beſides the trouble, and the hurry, and the ceremony of a daily confluence of company, that a great eſtate is generally incumber'd with, which one, who conſults his own eaſe, would not buy at any rate, and which, where-ever they are, do need a great virtue to ſupport them; I ſay, beſides all theſe things, there are required greater acquiſitions and accompliſhments of mind in the nobility and gentry, than in others of an inferior rank. As they ought to underſtand buſineſs and converſation better than others, ſo, if they would not make themſelves contemptible and diſparage the place they hold in the world, it is fit that they ſhould be competently learned in all polite and ornamental knowledge; but eſpecially in all that

ſort of knowledge which will render them uſeful to their neighbours, or to the public. To be ignorant in matters of this nature, is a ſcandal and reproach to them. Now any one who conſiders theſe things, will not readily ſay, that a man of eſtate is without a calling, and hath nothing to do. On the contrary, he muſt be convinced that thoſe perſons have a great deal of very neceſſary work conſtantly to employ themſelves in. And as the caſe ſtands thus with perſons of quality of the one ſex, ſo doth it alſo with thoſe of the other. Women have a calling to follow as well as men; and if they ſeriouſly attend to the ſeveral branches of it, they will find that they have little time to laviſh away idly. If they ſeriouſly conſider the duty they owe to God and their own ſouls, in performing their devotions regularly, and exerciſing themſelves in all the chriſtian graces and virtues, in order to the ſecuring their everlaſting happineſs in the world to come; if they conſider the duty they owe to the ſeveral perſons they ſtand in relation to; to their huſbands, in managing the houſhold affairs with prudence and diſcretion; to their children, by bringing them up carefully and virtuouſly; to their ſervants and families, in well-governing and providing for them; to all their neighbours, in being kind, and charitable, and helpful to them upon all occaſions (the difficulties and laborioufneſs of which they will find to be greater, in proportion to the greatneſs of their qualities and fortunes); I ſay, if they conſider all this, they will be ſenſible they have work enough to do, and time little enough to do it in, though they redeem as much as they can, from dreſſing and viſits, and the gaities and pleaſures of the world.

Laſtly, To draw to a concluſion of my preſent topic; as to young perſons of both ſexes, who are as yet under the

the wing of their parents, and free from the buſineſs and cares of the world, all that has been ſaid concerns them as well as others; for youth is the time of their laying the foundation of all thoſe good qualities, which will enable them afterwards to ſpend their days innocently and uſefully. And if they be not thus train'd up, and exerciſe themſelves in an active and ſerious way of living, there are not ſo great hopes that they will make the right uſe of their time when they come to be men and women.

And here I leave the conſideration of my text, according to the former interpretation given of it, as *circumſpect walking* implies diligence and watchfulneſs in proſecuting the work of our chriſtianity in general; and *redeeming of time*, the improving our hours to the beſt advantage, ſpending as few of them idly as is poſſible.

I proceed in the next place to conſider the other interpretation of the text, which I mentioned at the beginning of this diſcourſe, *viz.* that it may imply prudence, and caution, and diſcretion in the management of ourſelves and our affairs with reference to this world, eſpecially in times of difficulty and danger, that by this means we may gain time to ourſelves, and avoid the miſchiefs that the evil days threaten us with.

I own, that the diſcourſes and ſermons that are commonly made upon redeeming of time, do run upon the former way of interpretation, namely, in that ſenſe in which I have hitherto expounded and treated upon my text; and that it is ſeldom expounded in this latter ſenſe which I have now given, and am about to conſider. But yet, for all this, I muſt confeſs, that I think this latter ſenſe is preferable to the other, that it is the true one, and that which the apoſtle meant in this place.

This phrase ἐξαγοραζόμενοι καίρον, which we interpret *redeeming the time*, is but used three times in the whole Bible; once in the Old-testament, and twice in the New-testament. In that place where it is used in the Old-testament, our interpreters have rightly translated it *gaining the time*. The passage is in Daniel, chap. ii. 8. where, when the magicians could not answer Nebuchadnezzar's question about his dream, but would have put him off, in great anger he tells them, *I know*, says he, *of a certainty, that ye would gain the time*. The Chaldee or original word hath plainly this meaning here, though properly and strictly it signifies to buy the time, as may be seen in the margin of the Bible. And accordingly Theodotion renders it by the same Greek word which is here used in my text; and which we have translated *redeeming*, but which might be as properly render'd *gaining the time*. The magicians are said to *gain the time*, because they used delays and other artifices to save themselves from the present displeasure of the king. And in the same sense undoubtedly the word is to be taken in one of the texts of the New-testament, where it is used, viz. Col. iv. 5. and which indeed is exactly parallel to the text we are upon, and is a just exposition of it. There, says the apostle, *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without*, (that is, towards the Jews and Gentiles, among whom ye converse) *redeeming the time*. Redeeming the time; What is that? Why gaining the time, avoiding the present dangers you are threaten'd with by your prudent and wise behaviour.

This now being unquestionably the meaning of the expression in two of the three places where it is used, I think there can be no great doubt but it must have the same meaning in the third, which is my text; and especially,

ly, if we conſider the reaſon which is here given why it did ſo much concern all chriſtians to walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, endeavouring to redeem the time, viz. *becauſe the days were evil.* All which things conſider'd, lead us to this plain and ſhort paraphraſe of my text, wherein, I think, St. Paul's whole meaning is comprehended. "Ye are to conſider, O Epheſians, that the days you live in are evil days; the times are full of dangers and difficulties: It concerns you therefore, both for your own ſake, that, you may preſerve yourſelves, and for your religion's ſake, that you may bring honour to it, to walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe; to behave yourſelves with all the exactneſs, and prudence, and diſcretion, that ye poſſibly can, that by this means you may redeem or gain time to yourſelves, and avoid the dangers, whether ſpiritual or temporal, which the evil days will expoſe you to."

This I take to be the natural meaning of the text; and for authority, it hath St. Chryſoſtom's to vouch for it, who was among the antients the beſt interpreter of holy ſcripture.

Taking now this to be the meaning of my text, the argument I have to treat of from it, is, *that* wiſdom and prudence, or *that* circumſpect walking that chriſtians are to uſe in evil and dangerous times, both for ſecuring themſelves, and bringing honour to their religion.

This would indeed be a difficult argument, if we were to take our meaſures from the politics of this world, which change as often as the times do change, and which have no fixed rule but juſt the preſent intereſts, and which often put men upon reconciling contradictions, and which are not contriv'd ſo much for the honeſt men, as the cunning men of the age. I

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ſay, if the chriſtian politics were of this nature, it would be a preſumptuous thing in me to meddle with them; but, God be thanked, the politics of a chriſtian are quite of another ſtrain: They are the ſame in all times: they are eaſily underſtood by every body: their rules and maxims never claſh with one another; and the more honeſt any man is, the more capable and the better qualified he is for the living up to them: and therefore, without pretending to be one of the wiſeſt men in the world, I may ſafely venture to give an account of them.

The truth is, all the chriſtian politics are reſolved into one maxim, which every body is well acquainted with, viz. That a great deal of honeſty, mixed with a little diſcretion, is the beſt policy. The ſaying is not the leſs true becauſe it is grown into a proverb; and I dare ſay, that both the reaſon and the experience of mankind in all ages, generally ſpeaking, do bear teſtimony to the truth of it. That God, who in the contrivance of our natures ſtamped a vigorous ſenſe of virtue and honeſty upon our minds, as the great law by which we were to be governed, hath, in all ages, taken care to give reputation and ſanction to that law, by bleſſing and protecting the honeſt and virtuous, notwithſtanding all the crooked contrivances and machinations of ſubtle men to the contrary.

But to come to our buſineſs. The enquiry is, how St. Paul would have the chriſtians in his days to behave themſelves in evil and difficult times? He tells us in general, that they are to *walk circumſpectly*, that is, as we ſay, cautiouſly and prudently. But how is this caution and prudence to be expreſſed? Till that be declared to us, his trumpet gives but an uncertain ſound, and we are no wiſer than we were? I anſwer, that what

what St. Paul has here laid down generally, he has in his other writings treated of moſt particularly; and therefore to theſe other paſſages of his we muſt have recourſe for the directing ourſelves in the application of this his general precept.

1. The firſt thing I take notice of in his writings relating to this matter is, that rule of his which he often takes occaſion to put the chriſtians in mind of, viz. that they ſhould avoid, as much as they could, the giving offence to any, and make all innocent compliances with thoſe they convers'd with. Thus he ſaith to the Philippians, *Let your moderation be known unto all men*, Phil. iv. 5. And again in another place, *As much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 18. And again in another place, *Put them in mind to be gentle, ſhewing all meekneſs to all men*, Tit. iii. 1, 2. And laſtly in another place, ſays the ſame apoſtle, *Give no offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the church of God*, 1 Cor. x. 32. And of this kind of temper and converſation the ſame St. Paul propoſeth himſelf for an example, *Even*, ſays he, *as I pleaſe all men in all things*, ver. 33. *To the Jews I became as a Jew. To them that are without law, as without law. I am made all things to all men*, 1 Cor. ix. 20. 21, 22.

The meaning of theſe and ſuch like ſpeeches is this; that we are to yield to the weakneſs and neceſſities of thoſe with whom we converſe; not violently ſtriving againſt the ſtream in ſmaller matters, nor affecting a ſingular and moroſe behaviour, but being mild and eaſy in our converſation, rather receding from our little rights, than exaſperating men againſt us; ſuiting our manners as far as innocently we can, to the times we live in. And thus it is that Grotius expounds the very text I

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am upon; *redeem the time.* What is that? Why, saith he, *Honestis obsequiis vitate pericula, viz.* endeavour to avoid the dangers which threaten you, by all decent and innocent compliances.

But then you are to remember that this rule of giving no offence, and of pleasing all men, is to be understood with these two restrictions:

(1.) First of all, that the things wherein we comply with others, be things of an indifferent nature, such as may be innocently done, or left undone. If they be things ill in themselves, or forbidden by the laws of God and our religion, then to comply with the world is to conspire against Christ; then to please men is not to be the servants of God. How valuable soever peace and a quiet life may be, yet we are upon no account to stretch a point of conscience for it.

(2.) Secondly, The matters wherein we accommodate ourselves to the humour of others for peace sake, must not only be innocent and lawful in themselves, but such also wherein the laws and constitutions of the place have laid no restraint upon us. We owe a great deal to our neighbour, and we ought to comply with him as far as we can, though by so doing we depart from some of our own rights: but yet at the same time we owe a great deal more to the public than we do to any particular person whatsoever, and therefore must not violate the public laws to gratify the best friend we have. There are many things for instance in the outward worship of God, in which, if we were left at our own liberty, we might innocently and prudently condescend to the ignorance or infirmities of others; and it would be sometimes fitting so to do. But if public authority hath interposed and made a rule for us; if the laws have enjoined such a time for worship,

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or ſuch a form of prayer, or ſuch geſtures, or garments, or the like; here to ſwerve from our rule, becauſe others do not like it, and to do things of our own head for the humouring them, is a thing not becoming the modeſty of any chriſtian.

The only reflection I make upon what I have now ſaid, is this; If it be unreaſonable to break public rules and laws, though never ſo indifferent in themſelves, for compliance ſake, how much more unlawful and intolerable muſt it be to diſſemble or depart from our religion for the humouring of others. There are ſome, I doubt, who are for carrying this principle of compliance ſo far as to think fit to be always of that religion which is moſt in faſhion. So long as the proteſtant faith is eſtabliſhed by law, and countenanced by the government, they will be zealous for that: But if popery (nay, perhaps Turciſm) ſhould get the aſcendant, and come in the place of it, they could without much difficulty change their ſides. This, I grant, is a very eaſy and expeditious way to ſave ourſelves whole and harmleſs in all times: And if there was no ſuch thing as honeſty and conſcience in the world, it might be very adviſeable; but no man, who hath any ſenſe or regard to either of theſe, can poſſibly think of it without abhorrence. This I muſt obſerve, that the primitive chriſtians were ſo tender of compliances in matters of religion, and this point of the open profeſſion of it, (when they were called to it) was then thought ſo neceſſary, that any among them who did but ſo much as throw a grain of incenſe upon the heathen altars (which was interpreted as a ſacrificing to their gods) tho' it was for the ſaving of his life, was preſently excluded the communion of chriſtians: Nay, tho' a man did not ſacrifice, but only accepted a ticket

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or certificate from the officers that he had done so; I say, even complying thus far, was looked upon and reputed so great an affront to Jesus Christ, that the man was ranked among the apostates: And so were all those likewise who delivered up their Bibles to the persecutors upon any account whatsoever. And these three sorts of persons I have named, were the *Thurificati*, the *Libellatici*, and the *Traditores*, which we so often meet with in the ecclesiastical writers.

O therefore! let it be an immoveable principle within us, in all times to be constant to that which we take to be the true religion. Let us hold the profession of our faith without wavering. Let no prospect of worldly gain or advantage, let no persuasions or insinuations of friends, no concernments of our families and children, no terrors of persecution, or death itself, make us fall from our own stedfastness. Let us remember what our blessed Lord hath told all his disciples, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven*, Matt. x. 32. *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father and the angels of God*, Luke xii. 8. But thus much of my first head. I proceed to the next.

2. Another point of christian wisdom and circumspection in evil times recommended by St. Paul, we shall find to be this; viz. the preservation, as much as is possible, of love and unity among those who are of the same religion. There is nothing that he more presseth in all his epistles, as a means both for preserving the church in the evil times which were then, and for recommending christianity to the adversaries of it, than that those who profess'd it should be firmly united among themselves: *That they should be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind.* So he

he ſpeaks in the 2d chapter to the Philippians, ver. 2. That they ſhould *put on bowels of mercies, and forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace.* So he ſpeaks in the 4th to the Epheſians, ver. 2, 3. It had been happy for Chriſtendom if this point had been always carefully obſerved. The diviſions of chriſtians among themſelves have done more hurt to Chriſt's religion, than all the force and malice of its open enemies could ever do. And as it ſtands with chriſtianity in general, ſo doth it with any church in particular: Love and unity among the members of it is the ſureſt expedient, both to preſerve them from common danger, and to ſupport them under it. On the contrary, *Divide & impera* (as the ſaying is) do but break them into parties and factions, do but fill them with variance, and hatred, and animoſities one againſt another, and you open an eaſy paſſage for a common enemy to enter in among them; or if he be there already, you give him occaſion to exerciſe greater ſeverity and rigour, than perhaps otherwiſe would have been thought reaſonable: Nay, it frequently happens, where ſuch parties and breaches are, that not only a way is opened for an enemy to enter, but one of the parties brings him in, and turns perſecutor of the brethren. Men care not what they do, ſo that they can but oppreſs the oppoſite party, which at that time ſtands moſt in their way, though it be to their own undoing at the long run. This is fairly intimated by St. Paul to the Galatians; *If*, ſays he, *ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not conſumed one of another*, Gal. v. 15. His caution implies, that there is no neceſſity in order to the ruin of a church or nation, that the members thereof ſhould always fall into the hands of them who wiſh them ill; for

for they themſelves, by their unſeaſonable and bitter quarrels, may oftentimes do the work.

3. But in the third place, among the points of prudent walking in evil times, we ought not to omit that which St. Paul orders Titus to put the chriſtians in thoſe days in eſpecial remembrance of; *Put them in mind*, ſays he, *to be ſubject to principalities and powers, and to obey magiſtrates*, Gal. iii. 1. And St. Peter likewiſe lays the ſame charge upon thoſe to whom he writes with reference to the evil times they lived in; *Submit yourſelf to every ordinance of man; whether to the king as ſupreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him.—For ſo is the will of God, that with well-doing ye ſhould put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men*, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15. Nothing did more recommend chriſtianity in the world, than the peaceableneſs and loyalty of its principles. Had it been a peeviſh, unquiet, ſeditious, and turbulent religion: had it countenanced diſcontent or faction, or allowed its proſelytes to oppoſe the government, or even to complain or ſhew themſelves uneaſy under the adminiſtration of it; it had never ſo happily weathered out the ſtorms that were raiſed againſt it, and got ſuch kind entertainment in the world. The enemies of it did indeed endeavour to poſſeſs the minds of thoſe who were ſtrangers to it with a belief that it had an evil aſpect upon the ſecular power, and that the promoters of it were a company of ill-affected perſons: But if they could have made good this charge, they had in all probability done their work, and put a ſtop to the growth of that religion, which was deſtitute of all worldly advantages for the making its way. But the quite contrary did appear both in the doctrines which it taught, and in the lives of all thoſe who took it upon them. Never did any religion, nor any ſubjects, give

give such security to princes and states of the enjoyment of all their natural rights, as the christian religion and the christian subjects did. From whence it was manifest, that this was the best contrived and fitted to be the religion of the world; and that all men, who would prove good subjects indeed, must turn christians. Since therefore such is the nature of the christian religion, so obedient, so submissive to authority in its principles; and since such advantages may be expected to the christians themselves, and to the world, by living up to these principles, it cannot but infinitely concern all, who profess this religion, to be very careful in this point; to give no occasion to the higher powers to look upon them as enemies, or as disaffected to their interests: but on the contrary chearfully to own the government which gives them protection, and both in thought, and word, and deed, to pay all faithful allegiance to it. The christians thought this to be both their duty and their interest in the very worst of times, when they had no better princes to rule over them than such men as Caligula and Nero. How much more then ought we to charge ourselves with the practice of it, who are in so much happier circumstances, both with relation to our government, and our princes who administer it?

4. Another particular that falls under the general rule of *walking circumspectly, and redeeming the time, because the days are evil*, is that which is recommended by St. Paul in these words, *I beseech you, brethren*, says he, *that ye study to be quiet, and mind your own business, that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without*; 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; as much as to say, that the way to recommend yourselves *to them who are without*, and to make them think honourably of you, is *to study to be quiet*, and *to mind your own business*. This is an excel-

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lent rule of wiſdom at all times, but more eſpecially in times of danger or difficulty. Let every man diſentangle himſelf as much as he can from all ſorts of quarrels and embroilments, and from all things that may probably occaſion them. Let every man conſult his own eaſe and repoſe among his neighbours, by giving no diſturbance to them, and avoiding, as much as is poſſible, diſturbance from them. Laſtly, let every man dwell at home, as much as his circumſtances will give him leave, and mind his own affairs, (which will find him work enough to do) but meddle as little as poſſible with things that are foreign, and which do nothing concern him. I ſay, let every man do thus, and he ſhall find the ſweet, and the comfort, and convenience of ſo doing, let him live in what times he will. They who are buſy-bodies in other mens matters, create trouble and miſchief to themſelves in the beſt of times, and therefore much more may they expect to reap the ill conſequences of their pragmatical humour when the times are tickliſh and boiſterous. The way to live quietly and peaceably is to ſit ſtill, and take what comes without murmuring; to hear and to ſee, but without making ſpiteful obſervations and reflections; to be very careful of our words, that they do not needleſsly grieve or provoke any: Eſpecially to be in all caſes tender of our neighbours reputation as of our own. But they who give themſelves a liberty of talking about every thing, and every perſon, what their own ungoverned paſſion or humour ſuggeſts to them; and they who will be invading other mens offices, and giving their advice where it is not aſked, and meddling with affairs they have nothing to do with; they who are perpetually complaining of the times, and quarrelling with the preſent

ſent conſtitution of things; they who make it their buſineſs to enquire into the ſlips or vices either of public or private perſons, and will always have ſomething to inſinuate to the diſadvantage either of the one or the other; I ſay, this ſort of people, as they do a great deal of miſchief to the public, ſo it cannot but be expected, that by their too much meddling they ſhould now and then burn their own fingers. To conclude this point; To ſtudy to be quiet and mind our own buſineſs, is as likely a means as any to preſerve a man from all the outward inconveniencies that the times can expoſe him to. But if it be ineffectual that way, and the man cannot avoid ſuffering, yet he had better ſuffer thus than otherwiſe; nay, he ought to thank God that he ſo ſuffer. *Let none of you*, ſays St. Peter, *ſuffer as an evil doer, or as a buſy-body, in other mens matters. But if any man ſuffer as a chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed, but let him glorify God on that behalf.* 1 Pet. iv. 15. 16.

5. But laſtly, in ſpeaking to this argument, I ought not to omit another thing, which ſeems fairly to be hinted to us by St. Paul, as a very proper means of redeeming the time in evil days; viz. a more than ordinary diligence and exactneſs in our whole converſation. His words in the text are, ἀκριβῶς περιπατεῖτε; which if we would render ſtrictly, it muſt be thus; *See that ye walk accurately, that ye walk exactly*; that is to ſay, Let your converſation be regular and irreproachable in all things, ſuitable to the copy that Chriſt our Lord hath ſet before you to follow, and ſuitable to the holineſs and purity of that religion which you profeſs. As chriſtians are to have a regard to their whole converſation at all times, ſo are they eſpecially in evil and dangerous times: They ſhould then eſpecially

cially endeavour *to adorn the doctrine of God in all things*, as St. Paul elſewhere ſpeaks, Tit. ii. 10. that is, to ſet it out to its beſt advantage: They ſhould not ſully the native beauty of it by any corrupt, or mean, or undecent converſation, but give the world a fair view of its amiableneſs and goodneſs by their innocent and unſpotted lives: Nay, they ſhould ſet it out to the beſt advantage, making it by all exemplary virtues and graces to appear ſo charming to thoſe they converſe with, that they may fall in love with it. *I beſeech you*, ſays St. Peter, 1 Ep. ch. ii. ver. 11, 12. *as ſtrangers and pilgrims* (being as it were, in a ſtrange country, and amongſt many enemies) *abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul, having your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles.* Honeſt; how is that? Why laudable, commendable, honourable, ſuch as may be well thought of among the Gentiles; juſt as St. Paul uſeth the ſame phraſe in the 12th of the Romans, ver. 17. *Provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men*; that is, take care that all your matters be ſo decently managed, as that they may be approved of, and well reported among men. And this ſenſe the following words of St. Peter do confirm, 1 Ep. ii. 12. *That whereas*, ſays he, *they*, *viz.* the Gentiles, *ſpeak againſt you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the day of viſitation.* —— Here then is the province that is committed to all of us; this is the work that God hath put us upon: We are *to adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things.* Tit. ii. 10. We are to recommend our religion to all about us, not only by living free from blame, but by abounding in all virtue, and in all good works. Hear, I pray, what St. Peter ſpeaks to this purpoſe in the third chapter of his firſt epiſtle, ver. 10, 11, 12, 13. quoting a paſſage

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out of the Pſalms, *He that will love life, and ſee good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips, that they ſpeak no guile. Let him eſchew evil, and do good: Let him ſeek peace, and enſue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous; And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* There is certainly great ſenſe and reaſon in theſe advices; and all the men in the world cannot preſcribe more effectual methods for the procuring a peaceful, happy life to a man's ſelf, or bleſſings to his country, than theſe are: For by thus doing, we take the ſureſt way not only to recommend ourſelves to men; but, which is more than that, we take the ſureſt way to approve ourſelves to God, who certainly both takes care of his church and us; and who doth ſo order the affairs of the world, that he will never ſuffer any thing to come to paſs upon earth, but what ſhall prove for the good of his church, and of all particular perſons, who truly love and fear him.

Let us all therefore apply theſe rules to ourſelves. Let us live up to our principles. Let us not barely make a noiſe and a talk of what we believe and profeſs; but let us ſhew to all the world, that we have the true faith of Chriſt among us, by bringing forth ſuch fruit in our lives, as his holy doctrine and religion doth naturally tend to produce among mankind. Let us do nothing that is bad, nothing that hath even the appearance of evil. Whatever ſeems to be unjuſt, or even hard to thoſe we deal with, let us forbear it. Whatever looks like knavery or a trick, let us avoid it. Let our words and actions be all of a piece, being true to our words, and ſincere in our profeſſions of kindneſs. Let us be ready to do acts of humanity, and kindneſs, and charity, as often as they fall in our power. Let us

forgive

forgive injuries, and endeavour to *heap coals of fire on the heads of thoſe that do them*; Rom. xii. 20. that is, by our generous obliging treatment of them, melt them into reconciliation and friendſhip with us; for that is the method, they ſay, of melting the hardeſt metal, by heaping coals of fire on the top of it. Let us be regular in all our converſation, ſetting examples of piety and devotion, of temperance and purity, of moderation and contentedneſs, of humility and affability, and meekneſs to all above us. In a word, *Whatever things are true, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are lovely, honeſt, and of good report; if there be any praiſe, any virtue, let us follow theſe things*, Phil. iv. 8. This is the true and proper way both to ſecure ourſelves, and to do honour and ſervice to our religion, in all times whatſoever. *Who ſhall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* 1 Pet. iii. 13. The chriſtian religion is a thing ſo amiable, and its precepts ſo extremely agreeable to the nature of mankind, that wherever they are lived up to, they will by degrees mollify the heart of the moſt obdurate, and conciliate love and reſpect, at leaſt tenderneſs and compaſſion, from all ſorts of men. Let the times be what they will; the better a man lives, the more upright and juſt, the more humble and peaceable, the more devout and charitable, the more innocent and virtuous he is, the better he is like to fare in this world. But however that happens, this comfort ſuch a man hath, that he is of all others the fitteſt to conflict with a ſtorm: And if it pleaſes God that he fall under it, bleſſed, unſpeakbly bleſſed, ſhall he be; for exceeding great ſhall his reward be in the other world.

DISCOURSE VI.

The danger of cloaking or diſſembling our ſins. Confeſſion of ſins neceſſary to repentance. What ſort of confeſſion that muſt be.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

PROV. xxviii. 13.

He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper: But whoſo confeſſeth, and forſaketh them, ſhall find mercy.

THIS is undoubtedly one of thoſe texts of ſcripture which is referred to in the exhortation before morning and evening ſervice in our common-prayer-book — "Dearly beloved brethren, the ſcripture moveth us in ſundry places, to acknowledge and confeſs our manifold ſins and wickedneſs, and that we ſhould not diſſemble and cloak them before the face of Almighty God

" our heavenly Father, but confeſs them with an " humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart." For certainly the text ſpeaks of *covering* and *confeſſing* our ſins with reſpect to God, and not with reſpect to men. Indeed, to conceal our ſins from men, except in the caſe of injuries done to our neighbour, (and there we are bound to acknowledge our fault, and make ſatisfaction) is ſo far from a fault, that in many caſes it would be great imprudence not to do it; ſince to make them public might do a great deal of hurt both to ourſelves and others.

And as for confeſſion to a miniſter, (though that is always lawful, and ſometimes highly expedient; and if people among us did more practiſe it, there is no doubt they would find both great comfort and great benefit thereby, yet) it cannot reaſonably be thought to be intended in this place; and ſome of the papiſts themſelves, and thoſe the moſt learned of them, do in plain terms acknowledge as much, telling us, that theſe words of Solomon are not ſpoken of auricular or ſacramental confeſſion, becauſe the ſacrament of penance was not in being at that time, but was inſtituted by Chriſt long after. So that he doth not here ſpeak of *confeſſing our ſins* to men, but to God; that being the confeſſion that is every where in the Old-teſtament inſiſted on as a neceſſary expreſſion of our repentance. So alſo the *covering* our ſins which we are here cautioned againſt, and which is oppoſed to confeſſing, muſt be the *covering* them with reſpect to God. *He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper: But whoſo confeſſeth them, and forſaketh them, ſhall find mercy.*

In ſpeaking to which words I ſhall ſhew,

I. Firſt, What is meant by *covering*, *cloaking*, *or diſſembling our ſins*, together with the danger of ſo doing. *He that covereth his ſins, ſhall not proſper.*

II.

II. Secondly, What kind of confeſſion that is which is here made an eſſential part of repentance towards God; and how it comes to be ſo neceſſary. *Whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them, ſhall find mercy.*

I. Firſt of all, What is meant by *covering* our ſins; or, as our liturgy expreſſes it, *diſſembling and cloaking them before the face of Almighty God.* For here a queſtion ariſeth, How can any man cover or hide his ſins from God?

To which I anſwer, That truly and literally ſpeaking he cannot; for, as St. Paul tells us, *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do*, Heb. iv. 31. He ſees every action of our lives, and hears every word of our mouths, and underſtands every thought of our hearts. So that to hide any thing from God is perfectly impoſſible; and he is a fool, and ignorant of the nature of God, who thinks to do it: But yet ſuch fools and ignorants many of us are, that tho' we cannot conceal any thing from God, we may deſire it, and we may endeavour it; at leaſt, we may be ſo ſtupid, ſo inattentive, ſo very careleſs of our own actions, as to think that becauſe we do not look into them, God will not; becauſe we do not ſee them amiſs in ourſelves, God doth not; and becauſe we are willing to make the beſt we can of our own ſtate, to think that God will be willing to do ſo likewiſe: And this, in ſcripture language, is a *covering of ſins.* Though we cannot, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, cover our ſins from God, yet we may do it interpretatively; that is, we may uſe ſuch arts for the palliating our ſins, that, in God's account, will amount to the ſame thing, as if we thought or endeavoured to blind the eyes of his ſovereign majeſty, ſo as that he ſhould not ſee them. It is worth the while to explain this matter a little more

particularly, and to give an account of the ſeveral ways in which men may, in this ſenſe, be ſaid to *cover their ſins*. By which means we ſhall be the better able to examine our own conſciences about this point, and where we find ourſelves guilty, there to make application to ourſelves.

1. Firſt of all: A man may be ſaid to *cover his ſins*, when he hath no ſenſe of them; when he is ſo little apprehenſive of his faults that he will not own them to be ſuch; but is as eaſy and unconcerned about them, as if he was perfectly innocent.

And this happens two ways. Either through a ſtupid inadvertency, or through an over-weening conceit that hath poſſeſſed a man of his own righteouſneſs and goodneſs.

In the former of theſe ways the adulterous woman, that Solomon deſcribes in the 30th of proverbs, ver. 20. *covered* her ſins. *She eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and ſaith, I have done no wickedneſs.* And this, God knows, is the caſe of ſome among us (though I hope they are not many.) They live in a courſe of profaneneſs and wickedneſs, following their brutiſh devices and deſires in every thing, without any regard to God, or to good manners. They ſtick at nothing that may pleaſe their humour, or gratify their luſt, be it never ſo wicked, ſuppoſing that they keep within ſuch compaſs that the law ſhall not take hold of them. And ſo far are they from being uneaſy and troubled at this courſe of life, or owning themſelves to be great ſinners before God upon account of theſe things, that they rather ſtare and wonder at any one that ſhall blame them for theſe extravagancies. God help ſuch poor wretches, for there is no human means left to help them. Theſe men do continually cover their ſins, and are juſt in the

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ſame condition with thoſe that God ſpeaks of in the prophet Jeremy, *I hearkened and heard, but they ſpake not aright. No man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done? Every one turned to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battle*, Jer. viii. 6. O! a ſad condition is this! (even the worſt on this ſide hell) when a man purſues a wicked courſe with the ſame inſenſibility of danger, with the ſame unconcernedneſs and fury with which a horſe ruſheth into the battle!

The other thing, that often occaſions the *covering of our ſins* in this way (*viz.* renders us inſenſible of them) is an opinion that we have taken up of our own righteouſneſs and good qualities, which doth ſo fill our minds, that we have no leiſure to reflect on our miſcarriages. Of this we have a notable inſtance in the phariſee, that our Saviour brings in as going with a publican into the temple to pray, Luke xviii. 10. This phariſee, inſtead of acknowledging his ſins to God, (as he ought to have done, and as the publican did) had other matters to think of. He was ſo full of himſelf and his own performances, that he never reflected on any thing wherein he had offended againſt God; but, on the contrary, inſtead of condemning himſelf, he deſpiſed others, and particularly that poor publican: *He thanked God that he was not ſuch a one as he*, ver. 11. He thanked God that he was not guilty of any open ſcandalous ſin; and mightily did he magnify his faſting and his devotion, and his other good actions, ver. 12. This now was a *covering of his ſins*, and he ſped accordingly. For, notwithſtanding this magnificent opinion he had of his devout and ſtrict way of living, the other poor ſinner, that *durſt not look up to heaven, but ſmote his hand upon his breaſt, crying out, God be merciful to me a ſinner*;

this man *returned to his houſe juſtified*, ver. 14. and accepted of God, when the other was rejected.

I need make no application of this to our preſent purpoſe, it is ſo plain. But I deſire every one who is concerned in it, would do it; and I only add this: Let us all look to it, how we *cover our ſins* in this way, (*viz.* by not acknowledging ourſelves ſinners, but being inſenſible of our faults, and of our guilt,) upon what pretences ſoever it be: Whether it be that we are really ſo bad, that we have loſt all ſenſe and diſcrimination between good and evil, as it was in the former caſe I mentioned; or whether it be, that we think ourſelves ſo perfect, that we ſee no ſin in ourſelves, as in the latter caſe: I ſay, let us all have a care of this upon the admonition that St. John gives us in this matter, and I wiſh we would all remember it; *If*, ſays he, *we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us. But if we do confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.*

2. But in the ſecond place, a man is ſaid to *cover his ſins*, not only when he denies them, or thinks himſelf not guilty of them, but when he excuſes them, when he makes apologies for them, when he ſets himſelf to find out reaſons to juſtify himſelf for the commiſſion of them.

Of this we have a remarkable inſtance in king Saul, who, when he had tranſgreſſed the command of God in ſparing Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the beſt of the ſpoils that were taken in the war, 1 Sam. 15. and Samuel comes from God to reprove him for it, and to charge him with diſobedience and rebellion againſt God for doing it, though he could not deny the fact that he was charged with, nor could deny that it

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was expreſly againſt God's order, yet nevertheleſs inſiſted ſtifly upon this, that he had not done ill in doing what he did: for, as for the ſparing of the king, it was but an act of humanity and mercy; and as for the booty that was taken, he thought it a piece of religion and piety to *ſave the beſt of the ſheep and the oxen for ſacrifices to the Lord*, 1 Sam. xv. 15. Thus he juſtified himſelf.

But did the prophet approve of this juſtification? No, far from it. On the contrary he tells him plainly, That *to obey the voice of God was more delightful to him than all ſacrifices and burnt-offerings*, ver. 22. *And that rebellion againſt the divine command, was as the ſin of witchcraft*: And *becauſe he had thus rejected the command of God, therefore God had rejected him from being king*. ver. 23. This was the conſequence of Saul's ſin, and of his *covering it*. You ſee *he did not proſper*.

But thus are we in theſe days too apt to *cover our ſins*. When we have done things forbidden by the laws of God, ſuch things as we know we cannot juſtify, (if the ſcripture and the light of nature be to guide us) yet, when we come to reflect upon thoſe actions, it ſhall be hard but we will find ſome righteous, or ſome neceſſary end or other, that we had in our minds and intentions, when we did thoſe actions, that will clear us from all blame concerning them: Either the neceſſity of the times, or the neceſſity of our own circumſtances, or the ſerving our friends, or the ſhewing our zeal for religion, or ſome ſuch other warrantable cauſe, put us upon thoſe proceedings, which otherwiſe we ſhould not have ventured upon. And when we can once ſay, I had a good end and intention in what I did, or it was neceſſary for me to do it, or that good ends were ſerved thereby, and God in his providence gave me the ſucceſs I

deſired; why theſe conſiderations (let the action in itſelf have been never ſo bad) do ſo buoy up a man's ſpirits againſt all the reflections which otherwiſe his conſcience would be apt to make upon ſuch an action, that really he cannot call himſelf to account for it, nor confeſs it before God as a ſin. But this is but another way of *covering of ſin*: and he that uſeth it ſhall not proſper. Let us all know and remember, that no neceſſity, no conveniency, no good ends, will ever juſtify an action that is bad in itſelf. St. Paul having long ago told us, That *thoſe which do evil that good may come, their damnation is juſt*, Rom. iii. 8.

3. But, thirdly, a man may be truly ſaid to cover his ſins, when he doth what he can to extenuate them; when, tho' he doth not juſtify them as in the former caſe, yet he leſſens them; when inſtead of repreſenting to God, or to himſelf, his own wickedneſs, and manifold miſcarriages in their juſt dimenſions, and with their juſt circumſtances, he is wholly intent upon thoſe points that take off from the heinouſneſs of them, and would ſeem to render that which was a crime to be but a venial ſin.

And thus really men do frequently deal with God and with themſelves. They are apt to ſay of their ſins as Lot, when he ſaw Sodom on fire, once ſaid of the city Zoar, which he would have had preſerv'd, *Is it not a little one? and my ſoul ſhall live*. Gen. xix. 20.

To what purpoſe but this were all thoſe ſoft and genteel terms invented, by which we uſually cenſure great and notorious ſins both in ourſelves and others? How uſual is it to repreſent faults of a more than ordinary malignity by ſuch eaſy characters as ſhall affright no body from the doing of them? How many wilful deliberate tranſgreſſions are not only called, but thought

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to be ſins of ſurprize or pure infirmity? A courſe of drunkenneſs and debauchery paſſes often for no more than an exceſs of ſociableneſs, or a little too much good nature: And the worſt brand of it is, that the poor man who is guilty of it, is the leaſt kind to himſelf. Do not many of us excuſe our violent ungovernable paſſions, our furious, wrathful, quarrelſome, uneaſy converſation to all about us, by ſuch ſoft cenſures as theſe, That, alas! we are of ſomething too haſty a diſpoſition, and are too apt to be put out of humour? Doth not intolerable uncharitableneſs and cenſoriouſneſs often paſs under no heavier a name than of a little too much freedom of ſpeech, without any other mark of infamy? What amongſt a great many is pride and contempt of others, but only reſervedneſs of temper? covetouſneſs and oppreſſion, but only frugality and careful management of one's affairs? Uncleanneſs and fornication, but ōnly a heat and folly of youth? And abundance of other inſtances of this kind may be given.

And as we thus lightly paſs cenſures upon the greateſt ſins, whether of ourſelves or ōthers, in our diſcourſes, ſo it is much to be feared we have the ſame apprehenſions between God and ourſelves, when we come to reflect upon them, and to exerciſe acts of repentance for them. Even in this caſe how extremely apt are we to catch at every twig, to take advantage of every circumſtance that any ways ſeems to contribute to the alleviating the ſins that we find ourſelves burden'd with? What new and uncouth meaſures have we made to ourſelves for the eſtimating the greatneſs or littleneſs of ſins? We do not make a judgment of them by the word of God, and the rules of reaſon, but by other fantaſtic rules, by the commonneſs and frequency of them among mankind, by the reputation

they have in the world, by our inclinations and tempers, and by the powerfulneſs of the temptations by which we were ſolicited to them.

As for inſtance; if we be among the number of the common ſinners; if our ſins be of that kind that we ſee daily and every where practiſed among us, why then it naturally falls into our minds that we are not the firſt, nor the only perſons, that are guilty of this fault. There are thouſands about us that are as deeply concerned in this matter as we: And ſure, where ſo many are concerned, the puniſhment will not light ſo heavy upon one. If it be a faſhionable ſin we are engaged in, a ſin that hath gained credit and reputation among the generality of men, why ſtill that doth more either vindicate us, or excuſe us. For what prudence is it for any man in this age to be ſingular? Who can bear the taunts and deriſions that will be thrown upon us for not complying with the humour of the times, but living like men of another world? If we be in the briſkneſs and gaiety of our youth, when we thus fly out into extravagant actions, why that is a ſalvo for them all. A trick of youth is always at leaſt excuſable: As our juvenile heats wear off, and our judgment increaſes, we ſhall of ourſelves return to more ſober counſels. In the mean time both God and the world will pardon our youthful extravagancies. If the iniquities we labour under be thoſe which we are prompted to by our particular tempers and inclinations, why ſure we ſhall never be called to a ſtrict account for them, ſince it is not in any man's power to alter or new model his conſtitution. At the worſt, this is but an human frailty, which every man in our circumſtances is too apt to fall into.

But what are all theſe pleas and pretences, but ſo many inſtances of *covering our ſins?* If we meant honeſtly, and dealt with uprightneſs between God and our ſouls, we ſhould not be thus ſagacious in contriving ways to mitigate our offences, nor ſo forward to make uſe of them, if they were contrived to our hands. A ſincere honeſt penitent would think of none of theſe things, at leaſt he would not regard them. The main thing he would conſider, would be his ſtrict duty, and what obligations he had to perform it. What the laws of God and Jeſus Chriſt had obliged him to; and what ſtrength and power he had to live up to thoſe laws, and how highly he was engaged, by the oath he had taken to Jeſus Chriſt, ſo to live. What ſolemn vows and reſolutions he had made to renounce the world, the fleſh, and the devil, and to yield up himſelf entirely to the ſervice of his Saviour. Such an honeſt man would not inſiſt much on the corruptions of the times, and the bad examples before him, and the ſtrength of natural inclinations, and the like; but he would think ſeriouſly of his duty, and what his conſcience had often ſuggeſted to him about it, and what aſſiſtances God in his word had made over to him by his Holy Spirit for the performing of it, and how intolerably he ſhould be ſelf-condemned if he did neglect it.

I ſay, if we were honeſt and true-hearted to God and our own eternal intereſts, we ſhould reflect upon theſe things. We ſhould eſtimate our ſins and failings by theſe rules, and not judge of them by thoſe common meaſures which looſe and ſenſual minds have found out for the leſſening and extenuating of them.

4. But fourthly and laſtly, There is another way of covering our ſins, not unfit to be mentioned in this place, becauſe it is too frequently practiſed; and that is,

is, by taking the blame off from ourſelves, and laying it upon others. Though we are not ignorant of the fault, neither do juſtify it, nor yet extenuate it, yet we are loth it ſhould lie with all its load upon our own ſhoulders, and therefore prudently transfer it upon thoſe that were ſome way or other either tempters to it, or occaſions of it.

To give you an inſtance from ſcripture of this kind of covering of ſins: Adam, our firſt parent, had no ſooner fallen in paradiſe by eating the forbidden fruit, but when God came to chide him for his fault, he had his anſwer ready, that it was not ſo much his fault as Eve's. *The woman*, ſays he, *that thou gaveſt me to be with me*, ſhe tempted me, *and gave me of* the forbidden *tree*, *and I did eat*, Gen. iii. 11. By this firſt inſtance of ſin in the world, we may learn how natural it is for men to rid the blame and the guilt of their evil actions off from themſelves, and to lay it upon others. And let us all examine our own conſciences, whether this alſo be not frequently practiſed among us. How very ordinary is it when we are thinking of thoſe things that are apt to trouble our conſciences, and make us uneaſy, to make juſt ſuch a defence for ourſelves as Adam here did? If we can but find out either an author, or a partner, or an occaſion of our ſin, we are well enough. With ſome men the courſe of life they are engaged in, the neceſſary unavoidable temptations that their buſineſs or employment doth expoſe them to, is thought a juſt ſufficient reaſon to exempt them from the practice of thoſe ſtrict rules of virtue and piety that other chriſtians take themſelves to be obliged to. With others, that ſet of company and acquaintance they are linked with, is an apology for all the extravagancies they run into. Saith the one ſort, if I was of

another calling, had I but another profeſſion, I ſhould certainly avoid thoſe ſins that I now daily fall into. Saith the other, if I had not ſuch continual temptations from my friends and acquaintance, I ſhould certainly be another kind of man than I am. All this may be true, ſo far as we can judge of ſuch contingencies. But yet notwithſtanding, if we think this ſeriouſly, and make it our apology to God Almighty for our daily ſins, we do but juggle with him, and do not deal ſo uprightly and ſincerely as we ought to do. For I would fain know what ſtate of life is there that will not yield the ſame matter of excuſe for the faults we are guilty of? What condition in the world can we imagine ourſelves to be placed in, wherein we ſhould not have the ſame pretences, and ſtill ſhould have found out ſome body, or ſome things, beſides ourſelves, to have borne the blame of our ſins and irregularities? No; all this is ſtill *a covering of our ſins*, an unwillingneſs to find ourſelves guilty: Such a ſelf-love and tenderneſs of our own eaſe, as will do us no good in the world; for when all is done, he that *covereth his ſins, ſhall not proſper*.

Let us now make application of theſe things to ourſelves: And what application can that be but this? If [illegible] all ſinners, as, I am ſure, there is not one that now hears me but is ſo, what have we all to do, but to humble ourſelves before God, acknowledging that we are miſerable ſinful creatures, and that if he ſhould deal with us according to our deſerts, we muſt expect nothing but indignation and woe?

For, alas! the very beſt actions of our lives, if they were to be ſcanned according to the exactneſs of his law, and the perfection of his holineſs, would yield us but little comfort, they being all ſome way or other faulty. We have nothing to fly unto, but the boundleſs compaſſion of our gracious God, (thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt)

Chriſt) whoſe mercy is over all his works, and is, like his majeſty, truly infinite. To him therefore let us go. To him let every one of us addreſs himſelf with the poor publican, *Lord, be merciful to me a ſinner*, Luke xviii. 13. Let us ſay with *Job*, *I have ſinned*; *what ſhall I do unto thee, O thou preſerver of men!* Job vii. 20. *I abhor myſelf in duſt and aſhes*, xlii. 6. Let us ſay with the prodigal, *father, I have ſinned againſt heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy child*, Luke xv. 21. Let us ſay with David, *Out of the deep do I call to thee, O Lord*; *Lord, hear my voice. If thou ſhouldeſt be extream to mark what is done amiſs, O Lord, who may abide it? O therefore enter not into judgment with thy ſervant, for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified. But there is mercy with thee, therefore thou ſhalt be feared*, Pſalm cxxx.

Ah! my brethren, if we had true notions of ourſelves and of our own condition, and made a fair and juſt repreſentation to our minds of God's infinite holineſs and purity, and of our own ſinfulneſs and impurity, we ſhould all be thus affected.

Away therefore with all thoughts of covering our ſins; let us on the contrary, with grief and ſorrow of heart, expoſe them. To God, I mean, let us expoſe them. Let us unburden ourſelves to him, and with contrition and devotion acknowledge our own guilt, and beg his pardon.

II. And this brings me to my ſecond enquiry in my propoſed method; *viz.* What kind of confeſſion that is, which is made in the text an eſſential part of repentance; *Whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins ſhall find mercy.*

For it may be juſtly aſked, Is confeſſion any thing elſe but the telling God that we have offended him? And how comes this to be ſo meritorious a thing? Is not contrition

contrition and ſorrow for ſin of a great deal more value than this comes to? And is not reſolution againſt ſin ſtill more fit to enter the definition of repentance? and yet theſe things are not named.

My anſwer to this is, That it is very certain that contrition for ſin, and reſolution againſt it, are every jot as neceſſary to a true repentance as the confeſſing of it is. But this we are to remember, that confeſſion, both in the ſcripture notion of it, and in the reaſon of the thing, doth contain and include in it both theſe things.

We are much miſtaken in the nature of this confeſſion, if we make it to be no more than an acknowledgment, or repetition, or enumeration of our ſins before God: (tho' I grant that the word, in its firſt and proper ſignification, expreſſes no more.) No: This is the leaſt of that which is implied in this, when it is accounted a part of repentance.

If confeſſion was no more than a particular diſtinct acknowledgment of our ſins to God, then that would be the beſt confeſſion that gave the moſt punctual account of every the leaſt minute circumſtance that happens in the ſinful action: He would confeſs beſt that could tell beſt the ſtory of his ſins. But, alas! there is nothing in this that can recommend us unto God. When we ſpeak of confeſſion of ſins as a means of obtaining pardon for them, we mean by it ſuch an actual attention to our ſins, and to our guilt, and ſuch an hearty acknowledgement thereof to God Almighty, as includes in it both ſhame and ſorrow for what we have done, and likewiſe ſtedfaſt purpoſe of heart to do ſo no more. To confeſs our ſins, is to own with ſhame and confuſion of face, that we have tranſgreſſed the righteous laws of God, and deſerve his wrath and diſpleaſure,

pleaſure, and ſo far to diſlike, to diſapprove, and to deteſt our on actions, that we ſeverely purpoſe never to be guilty of the like again.

We need not be long to ſeek what kind of confeſſion that is which my text ſpeaks of, if we will but attend to what we require of one another in caſes of affronts and offences done to ourſelves. Suppoſing a man hath done ſome great injury to us in word or deed, upon which we are grievouſly offended with him, ſo far that we break off all thoſe terms of friendſhip and amity with the man which were between us before: He deſires to be reconciled to us, and in order to that, common ſenſe teacheth him to come and acknowledge his fault; and accordingly he doth ſo, and we accept of his confeſſion as a good ſatisfaction: What is it now that moves and inclines us ſo to do? Is it that he hath told us ſome things that we knew not before? No; for we did ſufficiently know all his unhandſome carriage to us, and that made us out of charity with him: Is it that he doth in a handſome ſpeech, and with many rhetorical amplifications, ſet forth the particulars of the injury, and tell us what firſt inclined him, what neighbour encouraged him, with what intrigues and circumſtances the whole buſineſs was carried on? Why in this he may ſhew himſelf a very artificial man in telling a ſtory: But this alone cauſeth no relenting in us. He may tell us all this, and in as good words, by way of drollery or defiance: That which works upon us to forgive the man the injury that he did us, is purely and ſolely the mind with which this confeſſion is made. We ſee that he is heartily ſorry for what he hath done; he is aſhamed of it, and by this confeſſion doth what he can to undo it again. He heartily wiſhes that he had never done it; and was it to do again, he would abhor the thoughts

thoughts of doing it. This now is ſome compenſation to us; nay, it is really the beſt ſatisfaction he can make us: And upon this conſideration of the man's repentance, we do repent alſo, and forgive him.

Now juſt upon the ſame account that we value or accept the confeſſion of offenders towards ourſelves, doth God accept of the confeſſion of our offences towards him: Namely, the virtue and acceptableneſs of it doth not lie in the material confeſſion itſelf, but in the diſpoſition of the heart and mind wherewith it is tendered. By this we may, in ſome meaſure, ſee what confeſſion that is to which a pardon of ſin is in the text promiſed. It is not barely a repetition of the faults we are guilty of to God Almighty; nay, tho' that repetition be made never ſo often, or never ſo particularly: But it is ſuch an acknowledgment of our faults as is accompanied with ſhame for them, with hatred to them, and with reſolutions to amend them. So that confeſſion of ſin doth plainly include in it three things:

Firſt, That we be heartily ſenſible of our ſins paſt, and ſorry for them, and angry at ourſelves for having committed them. And this is that which in common ſpeech we call *contrition*.

Secondly, That this ſenſe, and this ſorrow, and this indignation, do put us upon applying ourſelves to God, and there with ſhame and confuſion laying open our miſerable condition before him, and humbly and heartily begging his mercy and favour thro' the merits and interceſſion of our Lord Jeſus. And this is that which is *confeſſion* in the preciſe ſtrict ſenſe of the word.

Thirdly, That at the ſame time we enter into ſtedfaſt and ſerious purpoſes to amend what hath been amiſs in us, and to live more carefully, more obediently to the laws of God for the future. And this is that which is called *reſolution*.

And

And now having thus explained the nature of confeſſion, we have a fair and eaſy way opened to us for reſolving the other part of our enquiry in this matter; and that is, how confeſſion comes to be ſo neceſſary, ſo indiſpenſible a part of repentance. For it is eaſy to be collected, from what has been ſaid, that confeſſing our ſins in this manner, is, in the reaſon of the thing, a point ſo neceſſary, that we are no ways qualified for the obtaining forgiveneſs of them without it.

Can that man be, in any ſenſe, capable of mercy, that either ſtands upon his own vindication, or is ſo little ſenſible of his fault, that he will not ſo much as make acknowledgment of it? There is no man that ſo behaves himſelf, can expect to find the leaſt favour from any earthly tribunal before which he is convened, tho' the matter for which he is called in queſtion be of never ſo ſmall a concernment. And can we expect that the ſupreme Lord of the world will paſs by offences done againſt his infinite majeſty, and in contempt of his eternal laws, upon eaſier terms?

Whoſoever doth not ſorrowfully confeſs and acknowledge his ſins, cannot, in any ſenſe, be ſaid to repent of them. And ſure, without repentance, there can be no forgiveneſs. If it be ſaid that repentance conſiſts in the forſaking of ſin, and not in the confeſſing of it, I anſwer with a divine of our own, "That that may indeed "be the notion of a heathen repentance." For the pagans, it is confeſſed, took very little notice of this part of religion which we are now talking of. But it is far from being the repentance that God hath preſcribed to mankind in the Old and New-teſtament. Nor indeed would any of us accept of ſuch a repentance ourſelves (if it may in any ſenſe be called by that name.) We ſhould not think ourſelves well dealt with, in caſe of

of any injury done to us, that the man who had affronted us once, did ſo no more. But we expect that he ſhould acknowledge his firſt fault, as well as that he ſhould reform it.

I do not ſay that we can juſtly ſtand upon this, or require theſe terms of reconciliation from our brethren. But it is infinitely fit and reaſonable that God ſhould from his creatures. We are bound to forgive one another; but God is not bound to forgive us. That which in us is an act of duty, is in him an act of free grace and mercy. If therefore it be ſuppoſed that we are all ſinners towards God, and ſtand in need of his mercy, and that we ſhall not find mercy without repentance of our ſins, it will follow that our repentance muſt as well look backwards as forwards; that is to ſay, we muſt not only look to the reforming of our life for the future, (for that can do no more than prevent the diſpleaſure of God for the time to come) but we muſt alſo look to the undoing, as well as we can, our fore-paſt ſins, in order to the obtaining God's forgiveneſs of them. But this is no way in the world to be done, but by meekly, and humbly, and ſorrowfully confeſſing them.

And accordingly this is the condition that God in ſcripture every where requires, in order to the granting his pardon and mercy for our former tranſgreſſions. *If we confeſs our ſins* (ſays St. John, 1 Ep. i. 9.) *he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins.* And thus alſo David, Pſal. xxxii. 5. *I acknowledged my ſin unto thee, and mine iniquity I did not hide. I ſaid, I will confeſs my ſin unto the Lord, and ſo thou forgaveſt me the iniquity of my ſin.* But this is not all that is to be ſaid for the neceſſity of confeſſion, as we have explained it: For, in the ſecond place,

2. As no man is qualified for the mercy of God that doth not devoutly confeſs his ſins, (becauſe not to confeſs is an argument that the man doth not truly repent) ſo, if we do conſider what is imported in confeſſion, we ſhall be convinced that it is a thing, that in the very nature of it muſt needs, above all other things we can do, recommend us to God; for it is doing what right we poſſibly can to the ſeveral attributes of God to which we have done diſhonour. If God had never commanded this expreſſion of repentance, yet we ſhould eaſily have gathered from the reaſon of the thing, that it is the beſt, the moſt natural compenſation we can make to God for the breach of his laws. Not that, in true ſpeaking, there is any compenſation, any ſatisfaction to be made by us to God; Chriſt, by his ſacrifice on the croſs, hath done that for us; and that ſatisfaction that he made, we humbly tender to God on our behalf, and pretend to no other. But this nevertheleſs we may ſay, that by approaching to God with an hearty ſenſe of our ſins, and confeſſing them before him with truly contrite and penitent hearts, we make the beſt reparation we are capable of, for the affronts and injuries which by our ſins we have done to any of his attributes. By thus accuſing and condemning ourſelves, we do right to God's ſovereignty and abſolute power, by acknowledging him to have both a right and an ability to puniſh us. We do right likewiſe to his goodneſs, ſince we acknowledge that we have acted vilely and unworthily, and againſt our own intereſts, in tranſgreſſing his laws, which we cannot but be ſenſible are infinitely reaſonable and good, and much for our advantage to obſerve. To his omnipreſence and omniſcience alſo we make ſome ſatisfaction, ſince our confeſſion of our faults

ſup-

ſuppoſeth that we have a ſenſe that God knows and tak-eth notice of all our actions. In a word, by hearty and penitent confeſſion of our ſins, we both juſtify God, and and give glory to him. We may ſay both theſe things, becauſe we have warrant from ſcripture for them. Da-vid therefore makes a confeſſion of his ſins to God, in the 51ſt Pſalm, ver. 4. *That God might be juſtified in his ſentence, and clear when he is judged.* And when Joſhua exhorts Achan to confeſs his ſin, tho' yet it was well enough known already in the congregation, the ar-gument he uſeth to perſuade him, was, that this confeſ-ſion was for the glory of God. *My ſon*, ſays he, *give glory to the Lord God of Iſrael, and make confeſſion unto him.* Joſh. vii. 19.

This that I have ſaid is abundantly ſufficient to ſhew what great reaſon there is, that confeſſion of ſins ſhould be made ſo indiſpenſible a condition of the forgiveneſs of them.

I might add ſeveral other conſiderations, drawn from the great benefits and advantages that we ourſelves do receive by the practice of it; as for inſtance, the great peace, and comfort, and ſatisfaction that it muſt needs yield to an afflicted, troubled mind, thus to have diſ-burden'd itſelf of all its loads and incumbrances (as cer-tainly, to a ſenſible ſpirit, the conſcience of ſin is of all others the greateſt burden.) So that upon this account God's obliging us to the confeſſion of our ſins is the great-eſt mercy to us that can be. I might alſo add another conſideration, viz. the mighty obligation that this prac-tice of confeſſion doth lay upon all of us to forſake the ſins we do thus confeſs. Such an obligation, that really we muſt be impudent if we can always confeſs, and yet always return to the ſame ſins again. So that upon this account

account it muſt be acknowledged that it is as much for our good, as for the reaſonableneſs of the thing, that confeſſion of ſins is made ſo neceſſary a part of repentance.

But I ſhall wave theſe things, and proceed (by way of application of what has been ſaid) to ſay ſomething of the manner in which we are to confeſs our ſins, and to give a few directions about it.

The great buſineſs that we have to take care of in the exerciſe of this part of repentance, is, that we do deeply affect ourſelves with a ſenſe of the great evil of ſin, and the affront it puts upon the Divine Majeſty; as alſo with a ſenſe of the infinite obligations we are under to obey all the laws of God, both upon the account that they are ſo juſt and reaſonable in themſelves, and likewiſe upon account that God, by ſo many inſtances of kindneſs to us (as every one of us, if we would reflect, can give thouſands of inſtances to ourſelves) hath laid ſuch powerful and irreſiſtible engagements upon us to live up to a conformity to them.

1. If now we be affected with a ſenſe of theſe things as we ought to be, we ſhall in the firſt place, whenever we approach to God to confeſs our ſins, expreſs a hearty ſorrow for having offended ſo good, ſo kind, ſo gracious a God, ſo continual a benefactor: For having tranſgreſſed ſuch righteous, ſuch unexceptionable laws, which were given us purely for our benefit; and which we can never tranſgreſs but we act againſt ourſelves and our own intereſts. We ſhall bluſh at our extreme ingratitude to God, and ſee our own folly in ſo unaccountably departing from him in any inſtances; and at the ſame time we have theſe thoughts, we ſhall ſeriouſly reſolve to be wiſer for the future, and accordingly we

hall anew dedicate and devote ourſelves to the ſervice f God our creator, and Jeſus Chriſt our redeemer, enewing our vows and purpoſes that we have ſo often nade to him, in a faithful endeavour, in all our thoughts nd words, and deeds, to govern ourſelves by the laws e hath preſcribed us. All this is implied in the notion f religious confeſſion, as I have before explained it, nd is indeed the very life and ſoul of it.

2. But then, ſecondly, The more particular our onfeſſion is, the better it is, and the more acceptable t will be: Not upon account that God ever needs to e inform'd of what faults we are guilty, or takes any elight in the rehearſal of a long catalogue of ſins; but ecauſe this particular confeſſion is an argument and an xpreſſion of the ſincerity of our repentance, and ſhews hat we have ſearched and examined our hearts to the ottom, and that we harbour no concealed affection to ny particular ſin whatſoever, but that we are willing o bring out every enemy that ſpeaks oppoſition to God nd his laws, to be ſlain before him.

3. But, thirdly, He that confeſſeth as he ſhould do, will be ſure not to favour himſelf in his confeſſion; he will not be forward to make excuſes or apologies for his ſins. He will not ſay, that the faults he hath been guilty of, are either little in their own nature, or brought upon him by ſuch temptations as he could not avoid. On the contrary, he will rather aggravate his faults, nd lay a load upon himſelf, that God may lay the leſs oad upon him. He will acknowledge himſelf to be a aſe, vile, unworthy creature, unfaithful to his vows nd ſolemn purpoſes, and ungrateful to his God, who s every day heaping obligations upon him. He will remember all the engagements God hath laid upon him, and that he hath laid upon himſelf, to a ſtrict life of vir-

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tue and holineſs. He will bitterly cenſure his own folly, and unaccountable extravagance, that he hath in any inſtance departed from thoſe rules. In a word, the aggravating circumſtances which he can in his own mind apply to his ſins, will ſo affect him, that he ſhall become vile and mean in his own eyes; ſo unworthy a thing, that he will from the bottom of his heart profeſs to God, that he is not worthy the leaſt of his mercies. And certainly this is the confeſſion that is acceptable to God. This is the *judging of ourſelves* that the apoſtle ſpeaks of, 1 Cor. xi. 31. by which we prevent *our being judged of the Lord.* And laſtly, this is that oblation which David ſpeaks of, Pſal. li. 17. *of a broken and contrite heart*, which he ſays, *God will not deſpiſe.*

4. But, fourthly, It is alſo to be remember'd, that the quicker and ſpeedier our confeſſion is after the commiſſion of any ſin, the more virtue it hath in it, and the more eaſily it obtains a pardon. When it is our unhappineſs at any time to commit a fault, it is the worſt courſe we can take to lie under that fault. When the ſin is newly done, our conſcience (unleſs we be very bad) doth not fail to charge it home upon us; and we are then deeply ſenſible of it; and if we go immediately to God Almighty to unburden ourſelves of the load it lays upon us, we ſhall do it very affectionately, and with truly broken and contrite hearts; whereas if we let the matter reſt as it is, and do not preſently make our peace with God by humble confeſſion and begging pardon, our hearts in a little time will grow much harder, we ſhall loſe all that pungent ſenſe we firſt had of our ſin, and it will be a difficult matter afterwards to retrieve it. Beſides, it is a hundred to one, if we delay the preſent time, but the ſin gets ground upon

upon us. By not having made confeſſion of it, and renewed our reſolutions (which is the ſetting ourſelves in the ſame ſtate we were before, the next temptation to that, or any other ſin, will the eaſier find acceſs to us, and prevail upon us. We have by that ſin diſarmed ourſelves. We have ſlacken'd our guard, and are more obnoxious either to the ſame, or any other enemy, that will make aſſault upon us.

If we deſign therefore to live virtuouſly and religiouſly, whenever we are overtaken in a ſin let us preſently repent of it, and beg pardon for it, and reinforce our good purpoſes. By this means the greateſt crime we can commit will not do us any great miſchief. But if we let things alone, and defer our reconciliation with God, even a little ſin may prove dangerous and of fatal conſequence. It is in this caſe as it is with the wounds of the body: A grievous wound, preſently taken care of, will find an eaſy cure; but if thro' our negligence we let it rankle and ulcerate, it proves oftentimes hard enough for the ſkill of an able ſurgeon.

Upon this account I cannot but earneſtly recommend to you the rule that is ſo often mentioned in our books of devotion, viz. That every night before you ſleep, you would take an account of the actions of the day paſt; that you would examine your conſciences what has been done well that day, and what has been done amiſs; and for the former to return hearty thanks to God; but what you find of the latter, not to ſleep, till you have confeſſed it to God, and begged his pardon for it. If we would be thus punctual as to our repentance and confeſſion, it would be in a manner impoſſible for us to miſcarry at the long run.

5. But laſtly, to conclude, There is another advice that we ſhould do very well to put in practice in this

buſineſs of confeſſing our ſins, *viz.* That beſides our daily confeſſions and thoſe others that we may have occaſion for, we ſhould appoint to ourſelves ſome ſtated times, (and thoſe as frequent as our affairs will give us leave) for the more ſolemn performance of this duty. Why ſhould we not once or twice in a month ſet apart ſome hour or hours in a day for this buſineſs; that is, to take an account of our own actions, to examine the ſtate of our ſouls, to ſee how we are gone, forward or backward, in the great work we have to do, and to adjuſt accounts between God and us. Nobody but thoſe that have tried it, will eaſily conceive the benefits that we ſhall reap by this exerciſe. 'Tis certainly the greateſt preſervative of our virtue and good eſtate towards God that can be. And it is likewiſe the ſureſt way to ſet us right, if we have gone aſtray; eſpecially if to this exerciſe we add the renewing our vows by partaking in the holy ſacrament.

In a word, Let us all repent earneſtly of our ſins, and return to the Lord with all our hearts, confeſſing our own vileneſs and wickedneſs before him, and taking up moſt ſerious and ſtedfaſt reſolutions to ſerve him faithfully for the time to come in newneſs of life. Then will God accept us and pardon us, and give us ſuch a meaſure of ſtrength and aſſiſtance, that we ſhall both walk acceptably before him in this world, and ſhall likewiſe be made partakers of his eternal glory in the other.

DISCOURSE VII.

Several useful observations from this text. The conclusion against infidelity.

[Delivered in two Sermons.]

MARK xvi. 16.

He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: But he that believeth not, shall be damned.

OUR Saviour having, by his life, and his preaching, and his miracles, and his resurrection from the dead, laid a sufficient ground and foundation for the ready belief and entertainment of his gospel among mankind, comes upon his ascension into heaven, and as the last act he had to do upon earth, to issue out his royal charter and commission to his apostles, to go and preach this gospel all the world over; and this he does in these words, *Go ye* (saith he) *into all the world, and preach*

the gospel to every creature. St. Matthew hath set it down a little more largely, *Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* This was the apostles commission; this was the great trust committed to them, and in them to all succeeding ministers of Christ to the world's end.

But now lest it should be surmised, that this order might signify very little, since here was no enforcement of it, no obligation laid upon the people to whom they were to preach to receive their message, our Saviour takes care to remove that pretence by adding these words following, (which are the words I am now to discourse of) *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* Here is an obligation with a witness upon all persons whatsoever, to whom the gospel is preached, to receive and embrace it, since no less than their everlasting salvation or damnation depends upon it.

That which I design at present upon this text is, to make some observations and reflections upon it, partly in order to the clearing the sense of it, and partly by way of inference from it.

Our Saviour here orders his apostles to *go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*, declaring, that *whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: And whosoever believeth not, shall be damned.*

The first thing I beg leave to observe from hence is, That since men, to the world's end, are to be saved by believing the gospel, then there is a necessity that there should be always an order of men in the world, whose business it should be to preach this gospel. For, as St. Paul

Paul truly argues, *How shall men believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?* and *how shall they preach, except they be sent?* If Christ designed that the belief of his gospel should be the way of salvation as long as the world lasts, he must certainly have designed that there should be men set apart to preach and make known this gospel as long as the world lasts likewise. Accordingly we find that he hath *de facto* done so: For the commission he gave to his apostles, he did really mean should extend to all those that should succeed them in that ministry, as appears plainly in the last clause of it, as I read it to you out of St. Matthew, *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.* What is the meaning of that? Would he be with his apostles to the end of the world? Why, that could not be; they were to go off the stage in a few years; and so they did: But the world hath continued many ages after their death, and is yet like to continue. Christ's meaning then could be no other than this, that he would not only by his Spirit assist the apostles in the preaching of the gospel during their lives, but he would also continue that assistance to those that should succeed them in the work of the ministry, even as long as the world should endure; and accordingly we see that he hath hitherto made this promise good, having for above 1600 years all along continued a succession of Christ's ministers to gain souls to Christ, and all along likewise continued a succession of Christ's people in all parts of the world, who are gained to Christ by their ministry; and as he hath hitherto made good his promise, so we doubt not but he will continue to do it to the end of the world.

We beg therefore of all people, that they would not think it ſtrange that at this day they ſee a ſort of men (you may call them by what contemptible names you pleaſe) that are ſo zealous for this buſineſs of Chriſt Jeſus and his goſpel, making it their ſet work to be talking of it once a week, nay, and now and then, being ſo plain with you as to tell you, that it is upon the peril of your ſalvation if you do not give ear to their meſſage. The men may be contemptible enough; but yet the errand they come upon is not contemptible. How untowardly, how ungraceful, how unacceptable ſoever they may be as to their other circumſtances, yet, if they preach nothing but the goſpel of Chriſt, you are bound to liſten to it, nay, you are miſerable if you do not. And as for thoſe that do embrace it, it is no leſs a valuable treaſure to them, for being had from earthen veſſels. Let it not therefore be objected to us, when we preach Chriſt Jeſus to you, that it is our trade; we muſt talk at this rate, for we get our living by it: Alas! it is but ſmall comfort to get a livelihood by other people's credulity; I think an honeſt ſerious man would rather ſtarve than live by cheating. If there be any atheiſts or infidels among the clergy, any that, whilſt they preach Chriſt Jeſus to the people, believe no better of him and his religion than as a mere fable (as they ſay Pope Leo the tenth did not) they are certainly the worſt of men, and the greateſt impoſtors that the world can ſhew; and let them be treated as ſuch; no man will be ſorry for it. But when we heartily believe in Jeſus Chriſt and his religion, and are really perſuaded that neither we nor you can be ſaved without it, and likewiſe are called by the authority of God and man to the public preaching of it, we think it very hard we ſhould be the leſs credited, becauſe it is the

the profession we live by. If our Saviour's words be true, *Whosoever believeth, shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned*; it is certainly more your interest than ours, that you should all be such believers as we would have you. But let that be as it will, we shall have a sad account to make, if, being ministers of the gospel, we suffer you to perish for want of telling you of these things; or, if we cannot tell you any thing but what you knew before, at least for want of calling upon you, to put in practice what you know. Time was, when the preaching of the gospel was so far from being encourag'd by the state, that to be a public minister was the ready way to martyrdom: Yet in those days there were as many preachers, in proportion to the number of the hearers, as there are now: Nay, and their saying then was, *Væ mihi si non evangelizavero*, Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel! I hope such times will never come again; and I hope none among us wish for them: But if they should come, I doubt not but God would raise up those that would still preach the gospel, and would declare, even at the peril of their lives, that *Whosoever believeth, shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned.*

The second thing I observe from these words is this, That our Saviour here so puts his proposition, as to make baptism as necessary a condition of salvation as believing; for he doth not say, *Whosoever believeth shall be saved*, but thus, *Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved:* He joins them both together. What are we to learn from hence? that Jesus Christ has laid as great a stress upon an outward ceremony, as he hath done upon an inward virtue? No, by no means: But this; that the belief of christianity, without taking the profession of it upon us, and obliging ourselves to live

according to it, is not sufficient. A man will perhaps tell you, that he believes the history of our Saviour to be a true history, and that he hath a great esteem for his person, and looks upon his doctrine as the most excellent, and useful, and divine morality that was ever deliver'd to the world. Why now this seems a pretty fair account of the man's religion in comparison of what we can have from others. The gentleman that makes this confession of his faith, is civil to our Lord Jesus Christ. But yet this extremely falls short of what one must do that means to have any benefit by our Saviour. How great a respect soever a man pretends to have for the gospel, yet if he do not take the profession of it upon him, that is to say, if he do not enter himself into the number of Christ's disciples by baptism, vowing all obedience to Christ Jesus as his Lord and master, and owning his religion upon all occasions, and communicating in his worship and service, we cannot say that he is a christian, though he may be a well-wisher to christianity.

Examine the scriptures, and see what it was that made one to be a Jew, or an Israelite in the old time. Was it enough to think honourably of the law of Moses? No; but a man must become circumcised, and oblige himself to live according to that law. The case is just the same as to our christianity. I will speak the thing as plainly as I can; and in what I shall say, you will have a full account of the meaning of the words of my text. The business of our Lord Jesus, as our Redeemer, was to mediate or procure a new covenant between God and man, and to seal it with his blood. God's part in this covenant was this; He was to grant unto all those that entered into this covenant the forgiveness of their sins, and the grace and assistance

of

of his Holy Spirit, for the enabling them to live a holy life; and lastly, an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God. This was God's part. The condition of this covenant on man's part was this, That all they who expect to partake of those benefits, should believe in Jesus Christ, and own him for their Saviour, and assent to all his doctrines, and endeavour to frame their lives according to those rules he hath prescribed them. This is that gracious, that happy covenant which God establish'd with mankind through the mediation of our Lord Jesus. Well, now here is a covenant made, an everlasting covenant between God and man, sealed with the blood of the Son of God. All mankind that will be eternally happy, are to be enter'd into this covenant, actually and particularly enter'd, not the father for the children, but every one for himself, as it was in the covenant of circumcision. But how is that to be done? Why, our Saviour himself hath taken care to order and prescribe the way of it; *Go*, saith he, *disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Baptism then is the way which he hath appointed for the entering into this covenant; and great reason there was for it. Our Saviour found, when he came into the world, that his countrymen the Jews had used that ceremony of baptism many ages, for the admission of proselytes into the true religion. He, therefore, that came to take all nations, and peoples, and languages into his covenant, laid hold of that ceremony, which he already found to his hands used for that purpose, and applies it to his own institution, ordering all persons from henceforward to enter into his covenant by baptism.

But what then? Was there no more required to the making men partakers of the benefits of this new cove-

nant, but only to be baptized into it? I anſwer, no more, if we truly underſtand the importance of baptiſm; but a great deal more, if you take baptiſm only for the waſhing or ſprinkling with water. St. Peter, in his 1ſt epiſtle, chap. iii. ver. 12. tells us expreſly, that *baptiſm ſaves us*; and by telling us that, he ſaith as much as our Saviour here ſaith, that *Whoſoever believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved.* But then, that he might not be miſunderſtood, he immediately explains himſelf, *Not*, ſaith he, *the waſhing away the filth of the fleſh:* It is not that baptiſm which ſaveth us, *but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God*; that is to ſay, the ſolemn anſwers that were made by thoſe that took the vow of baptiſm on them to the interrogatories that were then put to them concerning the forſaking the devil and his works, and owning Chriſt Jeſus and his religion, and walking according to the holy laws he delivered. It was the performing theſe anſwers with a good conſcience that would ſave men effectually in the day of the Lord Jeſus. The outward ceremony of waſhing with water would ſignify little; but that with the things ſignified by it, that is, a holy and a pure life, ſuitable to the chriſtian faith, that would be effectual for the ſalvation of all men.

To apply now all this to our buſineſs:

When our Saviour ſaith, *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved,* his meaning is this, That the bare aſſent to his doctrine is not enough to give a man a title to that ſalvation which he hath purchaſed and promiſed: But there is a neceſſity of entring into that covenant which he procured of God for mankind by his death. The outward ceremony of entring into that covenant is outward baptiſm, and therefore all chriſtians muſt be baptized. But the main thing intended in that

covenant,

covenant, and ſignified by that baptiſm, is a hearty owning of Jeſus Chriſt, and a holy, and pure, and innocent life, conformable to the doctrines of the goſpel. Whoſoever thus believes in Jeſus Chriſt, and is thus in covenant with God, and thus endeavours to perform thoſe conditions which by that covenant are on his part required, every ſuch man ſhall be ſaved. But whoſoever continues an infidel or unbeliever upon the preaching of the goſpel, every ſuch man ſhall be damned. This, as I take it, is the full importance of our Saviour's words in my text.

The third thing I obſerve from hence is this; That the baptiſm of water, as appointed by our Saviour, was not a temporary inſtitution, a ceremony juſt to laſt for that age; but it was deſigned by our Saviour to continue in uſe among his diſciples as long as he had a church upon earth. The reaſon of it is plain, becauſe this was the method he appointed for the admitting men into his covenant, and into his church. If therefore all particulār perſons from age to age are to believe in Chriſt, and to be entered into his covenant, and made members of his church; then all particular perſons are to be baptized with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. If now this be ſo, what muſt we ſay of ſome religious ſects among us that are ſo very ſpiritual, that they will have nothing to do with ſuch a carnal ceremony as that of baptiſm with water is: Either pretending that the whole thing is meant in a myſticāl ſenſe, or that it is long ago antiquated? Thus do the Quakers, and ſome other ſectaries.

Theſe people call themſelves chriſtians, for they pretend to believe in Jeſus Chriſt. But do they really deſerve that name, when they were never entered into covenant with him? But however, to ſpeak the ſoftlieſt

of them; if they be chriſtians, ſure they are far from being right ſound chriſtians, becauſe they live in a conſtant tranſgreſſion of as plain a precept of Jeſus Chriſt, as any in the goſpel; and ſuch a precept too, as all the chriſtians in the world, till this laſt age, have always made a conſcience of religiouſly obſerving.

The fourth thing I remark upon this text, is this; That from theſe words we may be fairly led into an eaſy method of giving ourſelves ſatisfaction concerning a queſtion that hath made not a little ſtir and buſtle in the world; not that there is much difficulty in the thing, but that men, by endeavouring to ſerve parties and factions, have induſtriouſly made it difficult. The queſtion I mean is, What is the true notion of the catholic church out of which there is no ſalvation? All chriſtians are agreed that Jeſus Chriſt did found a church while he was upon earth, that ſhould continue to the end of the world, and againſt which the gates of hell ſhould never prevail. All chriſtians likewiſe are agreed, that this church is but one, however it may be ſpread into never ſo many countries; and this is that which we acknowledge in our creed, when we ſay, *I believe one catholic and apoſtolic church.* Laſtly, it is likewiſe agreed by all chriſtians, that out of this one church there is no ſalvation, at leaſt no ſalvation promiſed by God, or covenanted for by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But now here comes the queſtion; Where is this true church to be found? ſince there are ſo many different and oppoſite churches in the world, all pretending to be the true church, but notoriouſly contradicting one another both in doctrine and worſhip. Why now, methinks, we have a plain anſwer to this queſtion from my text, and that is this; Where-ever the goſpel of Chriſt is preached, and men do believe it, and are baptized into it, there is a true church:

church: In all thoſe places all the world over, where this is made good; in all thoſe places the true church of Chriſt is; and every one of thoſe combinations of men ſo preaching, ſo believing, and ſo profeſſing, are true parts and members of the catholic church (that myſtical body of Chriſt) out of which there is no ſalvation. We do not ſay that they are all equally pure, or that a man may communicate with all of them with equal ſafety: But that they are all true parts of the catholic church, though ſome more ſound, and others more corrupt. This, you will ſay, is a very plain intelligible notion of the catholic church: But how do we prove it? Why, we can prove it undeniably, beyond all contradiction, from the very words of my text. It is owned and confeſſed, that none out of the catholic church can be ſaved. But our Saviour here declares, that *whoſoever believes, and is baptized*, is put into a capacity of ſalvation. It therefore follows undeniably, that whoſoever believeth, and is baptized, is within the catholic church. I do aſk, Is it true, that whoſoever believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; or is it not? If it be not, then we cannot rely upon our Saviour's words, who yet is the author of our faith. If it be true, then every ſuch perſon is a member of the catholic church; otherwiſe people may be ſaved without being in the church.

So that you ſee in this preſent divided ſtate of Chriſtendom, where there are ſo many different communions, if a man be unſatisfied which of them he ſhould chuſe to venture his ſoul in; the queſtion he is to put to himſelf is not this, which of theſe communions is the true catholic church in oppoſition to all the reſt? as the papiſts put it; for none of them are ſo, tho' perhaps they are all parts or members of that catholic church: But this, In which of thoſe communions, that he hath any knowledge of, is the goſpel of Chriſt moſt purely taught and pro-

professed according to the primitive rules of it, and consequently which of them he may with the greatest safety join himself to? Now if this be the question, as it certainly is, a serious enquirer may, without very much pains, give himself satisfaction.

The fifth reflection I make upon these words is this: We may from hence be able to give a true account of the measure and standard of that faith, which is required of christians in order to their salvation.

All christians agree that we must be believers: But some, taking advantage of this, will not allow us to have a right faith, or to be orthodox christians, unless we can come up to all those notions and propositions which they esteem articles of faith. One would think therefore that some rule ought to be given us, by which we might measure the sufficiency of our faith, or by which we might know when we have believed all that is necessary; that so we might not be under the tyranny of such usurpers upon our consciences, as would be always imposing on our faith, till at last they came to make us swallow impossibilities for divine revelation. And such a rule, methinks, our Saviour hath here given us. His commission to the apostles is, *Go into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature*; and he adds, *Whosoever believeth, shall be saved*. Believeth? believeth what? Why certainly the gospel that he spoke of before: Whosoever believeth the gospel, and is baptized, shall be saved; that must be his meaning. It is the gospel therefore that we must believe; and to the believing of that alone, without any more, the promises of salvation are made. But what is this gospel? Why, it is plainly that doctrine which Jesus Christ himself taught, and which the apostles from him preached to the world, and which was all in their times put into writing, and which is all fully contained in those books

that

that we have at this day in our hands, which we call the New-teſtament. This goſpel then is the rule of our faith. Every doctrine that is there delivered we muſt believe: But as for any doctrine that is not there delivered, nor can be deduced from thence, we are not bound to believe that as an article of faith, let it come never ſo well recommended by the authority of popes or their councils, nay, or back'd with the credit of miracles wrought for the atteſtation of it. This, I ſay, is our rule of faith: That rule, which our church preſcribes to us as well as the holy ſcriptures; and bleſſed be God we do ſo ſtrictly keep to it. So long as we do ſo, it is impoſſible but we muſt be not only a true church, but alſo a right and a ſound church. We cannot indeed, upon thoſe principles, admit of abundance of points, which our neighbours lay ſo much weight upon, as to make all thoſe that deny them to be infidels and heretics. We do not believe the infallibility of the church, nor the ſupremacy of the church of Rome, nor tranſubſtantiation, nor purgatory, nor invocation of ſaints, nor twenty other ſuch articles, which they make neceſſary to ſalvation. And the reaſon is, becauſe we find none of thoſe things in the goſpel, as it is contained in the holy ſcriptures, which we are ſure would have been there, if God had made it our duty to have believed them. But we believe all that the goſpel teacheth, and make uſe likewiſe of all the means that are poſſible to underſtand it in its true ſenſe: and this we are ſure is all that Chriſt hath required of us, as to the buſineſs of believing.

But ſixthly, Another reflection I make upon this text is this; That this propoſition of our Saviour's, *Whoſoever believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but whoſoever believeth not, ſhall be damned,* doth only reſpect

respect those people to whom the gospel of Christ is preached, but not others to whom it is not preached. This will appear by the connexion of these words with the former, *Go*, saith our Saviour, *into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*; and then he immediately subjoins, *Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned.* How is that? Shall every one be damned that believeth not, tho' they never heard the gospel? No; that cannot be inferred from these words, but only this; those that upon the preaching of the gospel do embrace it, and enter into the new covenant it tenders to them, those shall be saved: but those that upon the preaching of the gospel to them do not embrace it, all such shall be damned. But here is not a word said of those that never had the gospel preached to them, either as to their salvation or damnation. The inference I draw from hence is this; That those promises of salvation, and those threatenings of damnation, which are made in the gospel, do only concern those that have the gospel preached to them, and that have means and opportunities afforded them for the closing with the one, and avoiding the other. But what then is to become of those people that never had these means and opportunities put into their hands? Are they to be saved, or are they to be damned? I answer, we can say nothing to their case, but must refer them to God. To pronounce positively of their salvation we have no warrant, because the promises of salvation, as the gospel declares them to us, (and we have no promises of salvation but in the gospel) are only made to those that believe in Jesus Christ, and enter into his covenant by baptism. On the other side, to pronounce of their damnation, seems very harsh and uncharitable; nor do I know that any

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n the scripture are threaten'd with damnation, but such is reject the gospel after it is preached to them, or dishonour their profession after they have embraced it, by a wicked unholy life; neither of which can be said of those we are now speaking of. We ought therefore, as I said, to determine nothing about them either way, but to leave them to the uncovenanted mercies of God, if I may so speak. For what have we to do to judge another man's servant, as St. Paul expresseth it? They are God's servants, and to him their master they stand or fall; and if it pleaseth him, he is able to make them stand. This we are certain of, that the judge of all the world will do right. Nor will he demand the tale of bricks, where he hath allowed no straw to make them. And this we are likewise certain of, that when the great day of retribution shall come, the day when all accounts shall be cast up, and rewards and punishments distributed to every one according to their works, God Almighty will then vindicate not only his justice and his truth, but his goodness and his mercy also, to the satisfaction of all the world; and a thousand ways he may have of adjusting those matters, and such like intricate points, which we now cannot conceive.

But in the seventh place; The last reflection I make upon these words, is this; That what is here promised to all christians in my text, and what is here denounced against all unbelievers, was designed by our Saviour to extend to all ages of the world. As those that then believed, and were baptized upon the apostles preaching, were put into a condition of salvation, so are all people put into the same condition that at this day among us do enter themselves into the christian covenant. And as those that continued infidels and unbelievers when the gospel was preached to them then, were doom'd to dam-

damnation; so shall it fare likewise with all those that now-a-days deny or reject that gospel that is taught among us. There is the same necessity of believing in Christ now that there was then; and there is the same guilt and punishment of refusing him; for there is no other name under heaven given unto man, either then or now, by which we can be saved. There is indeed this difference between the persons that were preached to then, and those that are preached to now; that in those days people first believed, and afterwards were baptized; but now (as it must be in countries where christianity is the national religion) people are first baptized, and afterwards they believe; or, to speak a sad truth, some of them afterwards do not believe. But let not any think that their baptism without faith in Christ, and owning their relation to him in all the instances that he hath commanded, will signify any thing. Notwithstanding their baptism, we still declare, and we have authority so to do, that whosoever believeth not the gospel shall be damned.

I would to God all men, that go by the name of christians among us, but yet in their hearts do not own Christ for their Lord and master, would seriously consider this. They have put on Christ's livery, as I may speak, for they are baptized, and they call themselves by his name, and they do not refuse to be present where his worship is celebrated, and sometimes where his sacraments are administered, especially when they have a turn to serve; but yet, if there be any regard to be given to what passes in their conversation, and that in such humours too, when one would be apt to think they must speak their minds, they have no more true belief of christianity, nor real veneration for Jesus Christ, and his gospel, than they have for Mahomet

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and his alcoran. It is a melancholy conſideration that there ſhould be any ſuch men in a chriſtian country, eſpecially in ſuch a country as ours, where the goſpel is taught in its native truth and ſimplicity, without thoſe mixtures of foppery, which in other countries might alienate the minds of ſagacious perſons from it. But it is the pleaſure of God that his religion and his church ſhould always be exerciſed by enemies from one quarter or other. When ſuperſtition on one hand, and enthuſiaſm on the other, could not, after their utmoſt efforts, do us any miſchief, lo! atheiſm and infidelity ſtart up and ſeem to threaten us with ruin. But this is our comfort, that as the principles that lead to thoſe things are impious and hated of God, ſo we are ſure they can never ſerve any intereſts of man; but on the contrary, are the moſt deſtructive to human ſociety of any thing in the world: And therefore we cannot doubt but the government will do all that is poſſible for the diſcouraging and putting out of countenance all this ſort of principles. And that very thing alone, with this kind of people, will do more toward the effectual ſuppreſſing of them, than all the arguments in the world.

But in the mean time they call for arguments from us; and God forbid we ſhould refuſe them. They plead that it is againſt all reaſon and juſtice, that a man ſhould be damned for that which he cannot help: Our text here ſaith, that *Whoſoever believeth not the goſpel, ſhall be damned.* They anſwer to this, "That they "would believe the goſpel if they could, but they can-"not;" and they urge, that a man cannot believe more than he hath evidence for; for it is no more in our power to believe what we have a mind to, than it is to *add a cubit to our ſtature*, if we have a mind to be taller; and therefore, ſay they, what ſenſe is there in

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ſaying that a man ſhall be damned for not believing the goſpel, when it is not in his power to believe it if he would?

This is the greateſt objection that is made againſt our text. I beg therefore your leave to give an anſwer to it, and then I have done. And here we do readily allow them all that they aſk. We grant that a man cannot believe what he will, any more than he can love or hate what he knows nothing of. When any thing is propoſed to a man's belief, his underſtanding muſt firſt be convinced of the truth of it, before he can believe it. The thing muſt either be plain to him at the firſt ſight, or it muſt be proved by deduction from plain principles that he doth already acknowledge; or laſtly, he muſt believe it upon the credit or authority of the perſon that propoſeth it to him, who is ſuch a one as he hath reaſon to think cannot, or will not impoſe upon him: In a word, every one who believes a thing, muſt have ſome reaſon, or at leaſt muſt think he hath ſome reaſon, for the belief of it.

But then, after we have granted all this, it muſt likewiſe be acknowledged on the other hand, that there are a great many things which a man cannot, or doth not believe, tho' there be reaſon and evidence enough to be given for the truth of them: As for inſtance; I dare ſay you will all allow, that there is reaſon and evidence enough to be given that there is but one eternal God, the maker of heaven and earth, and that the ſun, and moon, and ſtars are no Gods, but only the creatures of God; and yet it is certain that there hath been, and are people in the world that worſhip theſe creatures as eternal Gods. Again, I ſay, you think there is proof enough to be given that the bread and wine in the ſacrament do continue in their natures, and are truly bread

bread and wine, even after the words of conſecration have been pronounced upon them; and yet you know there are a great many chriſtians in the world that are ſo far from being of this belief, as to take them for the very real body and blood of Chriſt. You ſee then, that as a man cannot believe without reaſon, ſo he may ſtill continue an unbeliever, tho' there be all the reaſon in the world that he ſhould believe.

Well, what do we gather from hence? Why, we gather from hence a plain ſolution of this difficulty that is before us; and that is this:

We do not pretend that a man ſhall be called to an account by God for not believing a thing when there was no reaſon to believe it; nay, neither do we ſay that a man ſhall be called to account for not believing every thing, tho' yet he had the greateſt reaſon in the world to believe it. For it may ſo happen (as it doth every day in a thouſand caſes) that a thing may be true, and a man, if he will enquire, may have proof beyond all contradiction for the truth of it, and yet it ſhall be of no ill conſequence to him, whether he believes it or no, becauſe it was not his buſineſs, nor his intereſt, nor his duty, to take pains to inform himſelf right about it. But this is that which we ſay: In a matter where it is a man's greateſt buſineſs, and greateſt intereſt, and greateſt duty to inform himſelf aright, and to believe aright, and in a matter likewiſe where there are ſufficient means and opportunities afforded to every one for the gaining a right information, and having a right belief; and laſtly, in a matter where there is ſo much evidence and proof of the thing, that every one would believe, if he did all that either an honeſt or a wiſe man would think himſelf obliged to in theſe circumſtances: I ſay, where-ever this is the caſe (as we ſay this is the caſe

caſe among us) it is nonſenſe and madneſs for any man to plead that it is not in his power to believe, and therefore he thinks it unjuſt he ſhould be called to account by God for not believing. Here therefore is the iſſue we put the point upon : We do not pretend that any man ſhall be damned for not believing what it was not in his power to believe ; but we ſay, if it is thro' your own fault that you do not believe, or if the caſe be ſuch that if you had been ſincere, honeſt, virtuous men, you would have believed ; then your unbelief is the effect of vice and wickedneſs, and is a plain piece of immorality, and you are accountable for it, as you are for adultery or murder, or any ſuch wilful crimes.

And therefore, to conclude : I do here, by way of application, earneſtly addreſs myſelf to all thoſe among us, that are in their hearts unbelievers, however they do outwardly profeſs the chriſtian religion, and frequent our aſſemblies. I beg of you, in the name of God, to examine yourſelves ſeriouſly concerning the grounds of your unbelief, and ſee whether you can ſatisfy your own conſciences that you have done all that ſerious, prudent, unbiaſs'd men would do in a matter of ſuch importance as this is, wherein no leſs than your everlaſting ſalvation or damnation is concerned. If your own conſciences can teſtify to you, that you have dealt honeſtly and impartially in this matter, and that yet, after all your endeavours, you cannot find reaſon enough to perſuade you heartily to believe in Jeſus Chriſt, I have nothing further to ſay to you ; let God judge this matter between him and you, as he certainly one day will. Charity will oblige us to believe the beſt of you. And therefore, if this be your caſe, we cannot rank you otherwiſe than in the number of thoſe heathens that do

ot believe the goſpel, becauſe it was never fairly pro-roſed to them.

But then, in the mean time that you make this enquiry into your own ſtate, be not too forward to deceive yourſelves, nor to entertain a good opinion of yourſelves, upon a general and ſlight view of your own condition, but put ſuch queſtions honeſtly and home to your conſciences, as any ſincere man would do in ſuch a matter as this.

As for inſtance:

Have you ſeriouſly and deliberately conſidered the chriſtian religion in all the parts of it? Have you acquainted yourſelves with all the doctrines of it, how ſuitable they are to the natural notions that man has of God and religion, and how extremely they tend to the making mankind both wiſe and happy?

Have you examined the precepts of the goſpel, and taken notice how much they excel the morality of the beſt philoſophers, and how wonderfully they are contrived and accommodated to the uſes and indigencies of all ſorts of men, in whatever ſtate and condition they be; and in a word, how happy the world would be, if all men were hearty believers of theſe doctrines, and ſerious practiſers of theſe precepts?

Have you ſeriouſly taken into your conſideration the rich and invaluable promiſes that are in this religion made over to mankind, which no other religion can pretend to; ſuch as the forgiveneſs of all our ſins upon repentance, and aſſiſtance of God's grace to enable us to live holy and pure lives, and laſtly an eternal, immortal life of glory and happineſs in another world? Why, natural reaſon will teach us that all theſe things are worthy of God to promiſe, and that we want, extremely want, the aſſurance of theſe things, in order to the

the making us good. And yet no other religion in the world hath aſſured us of them; but the religion of our Lord Jeſus.

Have you likewiſe impartially examin'd the evidence and proof that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt gave for the truth of his being ſent by God to teach all theſe things to the world, and the little or no objections that are to be made againſt it? Have you looked into the prophecies of the Old-teſtament, which for two thouſand years together ſpoke of a Saviour to be ſent to mankind, and taken notice how exactly they were fulfilled by our Saviour? Have you conſidered the perſon of our Lord Jeſus, and his way of living, how innocent, how ſincere, how pious, how charitable, how entirely devoted to God's ſervice, how free from all ſuſpicion of being a deſigning man, and how conſtant to the death in aſſerting his pretenſions?

Have you thought of the prodigious miracles that he wrought all his life long for the confirmation of his doctrine; the voices of God from heaven to atteſt that he was the Son of God; his reſurrection from the dead, and viſible aſcenſion into heaven? Which things are demonſtrations to all mankind, that believe a God and providence, that Jeſus Chriſt was no other than he pretended to be, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world?

Laſtly, Have you conſidered that the ſame power and virtue that was in Chriſt for the doing all theſe wonderful things, was, as he promiſed, continued to his apoſtles, and to all the preachers of the goſpel for many years afterwards, even till they had converted the world from idolatry to the belief of Chriſt Jeſus? And that by no other ways nor methods, but by the excellency of their doctrine, and the holineſs of their lives, and

and the wonderful miracles they performed, and their readineſs at any time to lay down their lives for the cauſe of the chriſtian religion.

Theſe are ſome of the things which you ought very well to conſider before you can ſatisfy yourſelves, that you have reaſon to keep off from being chriſtians. But you will perhaps ſay, you have thought of all theſe things, but yet you are not convinc'd that you ought to embrace Chriſt's religion. Why, it is almoſt impoſſible. Sure you have not thought of them as you ſhould do. Sure you was biaſſed and prejudiced on the other ſide, when you took theſe matters into your conſideration. But that is not fair thinking. You ought to come to thoſe matters wholly free and indifferent, at leaſt as much as is poſſible. But pray ſay ſeriouſly, whether the objections and diſſatisfactions which you have met with about the chriſtian religion be the reſult of your own thinking, and ſuch as you naturally fall into; or you have rather learned them from the diſcourſe of that lewd, debauch'd, hot-headed company that you have uſed to converſe with. If ſo, there is no great reaſon you ſhould inſiſt upon them.

I pray be pleaſed to examine yourſelves further. Are you really concerned for another world after this? and do you really deſire and endeavour to approve yourſelves to God as well as you can? If you do, then I am ſure you will do all that natural religion will teach you about this matter. Tho' you do not believe in Chriſt, yet you will live very ſober and virtuous lives, and you will heartily pray to God likewiſe to direct you in the way that is acceptable to him. Now do you do this? Do you every day addreſs to the throne of grace for aſſiſtance and direction? and do you hate every thing that is apparently evil, and make it your buſineſs to be as

pious, and charitable, and sober, as is possible? Why, whether you believe in Christ or no, these are the dictates of natural religion; and you must thus frame your life, otherwise you are not qualified for any direction or assistance from God Almighty. And if any man among us do thus frame his life, I shall think it very strange if such a man be not a hearty christian. Sure I am, I never yet heard or read of any instance to the contrary.

The truth of it is, men that are of this temper, men that are thus honestly disposed, never fail to believe in Christ at last, tho' at the beginning they do not. All such shall come unto Christ, because the Father draweth them. All such, because they endeavour to do God's will, shall know of Christ's doctrine, that it is of God. All this our Saviour hath long before told us.

But here is our case:

It is not the virtuous, the good, the humble, the modest, the charitable, the piously-disposed souls that disbelieve christianity among us, but another sort of men. And I pray God the great reason of their unbelief be not this, that the doctrines of the gospel do not suit with those principles of liberty which they have espoused; nor with that course of life they are engaged in: and therefore since the gospel is against them, they will be against the gospel. But woe be to all such, for they are of all mortals in the most hopeless condition.

"I pray God convert them from the evil of their "ways, that they may understand the things that be-"long to their peace before they be hid from their "eyes." And we ought all to join in this prayer, not only for their sakes, but for the public. For atheism and irreligion are infinitely mischievous to the kingdom, as well as to those particular persons who maintain and promote

promote them. And I pray God that all of us, who do heartily embrace and believe the christian religion, may frame our lives and conversation suitably to it, that so we may be no disparagement to our holy faith, but may rather *adorn the doctrine of God* we do profess *in all things:* This is the true way to obtain happy, peaceful days in this world, and the way likewise that will infallibly bring us safe to the kingdom of heaven after this world is ended. May God Almighty grant us both these blessings for the sake of his dear Son our Lord Jesus; *To whom*, &c.

DISCOURSE VIII.

Of conformity to the cuſtoms and ways of the world. How far allowable, and how far not.

[Deliver'd in two Sermons.]

ROM. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world.

THE whole verſe is this: *And be not conformed to this world, but be ye tranſformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*; that is, ye that call yourſelves chriſtians muſt not follow the ways of the men of this world, nor frame your converſation according to the evil cuſtoms you ſee before you; but you are to look upon yourſelves as men of another world: your minds are to be formed and acted with new ſpiritual principles, that ſo ye may both approve and

and practiſe what the goſpel of Chriſt requires of you, which is that good, and acceptable, and perfect law by which God would have you to frame your lives.

This point of not conforming to the world is ſo eſſential to chriſtianity, that it is one of thoſe things which we all vow in our baptiſm: for as we then promiſe to renounce the devil and all his works, ſo do we alſo promiſe to renounce the pomps and vanities of this world; and therefore, as there is the greateſt obligation that is poſſible laid upon us to practiſe this duty, ſo it is of mighty concernment to us that we do well underſtand it, otherwiſe we ſhall bring endleſs ſcruples and difficulties upon ourſelves. For to think of living in this world, and not in many things conforming to it, or complying with the cuſtoms of it, will ſeem even to the beſt of men an hard, if not impoſſible, taſk; and conſequently, if the bounds and limits of this precept be not well underſtood, we muſt unavoidably be entangled in many perplexities.

To fix theſe bounds therefore ſhall be my endeavour in the enſuing diſcourſe. And in order hereunto I ſhall do theſe four things:

I. Firſt of all I ſhall ſhew what kind of conformity to the world is allowable to chriſtians.

II. What kind of conformity to the world is here forbidden.

III. I ſhall name ſome particular inſtances in which this precept of not conforming to the world doth more eſpecially ſeem to concern us at this day.

IV. I ſhall give account by what rules and meaſures we are to guide ourſelves in this point of conformity to the world, that what is lawful in itſelf may not be unlawful or ſinful in us.

I. I begin with the firſt of theſe points, that is, to ſhew what kind of conformity to this world is allowable to chriſtians. And what I have to ſay upon this head I ſhall comprize in two propoſitions :

1ſt. Firſt of all ; No man is bound to differ from the world merely for difference ſake.

2dly. That it is not only lawful, but expedient, that in things which are not by the law of God forbidden, we ſhould frame our converſation according to the courſe of the world.

1ſt. No man is bound to differ from the world in his way of living merely for difference ſake.

My meaning is this : No man is oblig'd to forbear or abſtain from the practice or uſe of any thing merely upon this account, that it is a thing that the world, or, if you will, the wicked men of the world, do practiſe or uſe.

This propoſition I lay down to obviate the pretences of ſome enthuſiaſtical men among us, a main article of whoſe religion is, to be at as wide a diſtance from the world in their way of living as poſſibly they can be ; for ſay they, *the whole world lieth in wickedneſs*, and all the people of God are to come out of it ; no further to comply with the manners and cuſtoms of it than what abſolute neceſſity doth require, for all further compliances ſavour of the wiſdom of this world, which is carnal, and ſenſual, and diviliſh : And ſo far have they run this point, that it is accounted unlawful to uſe the ſame language or ſpeech that is commonly uſed in the world, but every thing is to be ſpoken, ſo far as may be, in the ſcripture language. And as much do they declaim againſt the common ways of behaviour and deportment that are practiſed among men. All that expreſſion of duty to our ſuperiors, and of civility and reſpect to others,

others, which is according to the mode of the country, whether it be by uncovering the head, or bowing the knee, or by giving them their juſt and uſual titles, or by ſaluting them in the common form of ceremony and addreſs; all this is exploded as an unchriſtian thing. And the ſame war do they declare againſt the habits and garments of the world that they do againſt its language and behaviour. Whoſoever gives up his name to the profeſſion of religion, muſt mortify himſelf as to all gaiety of attire, and even decency too; he muſt ſtrip himſelf of every thing that is rich or ornamental about him, and muſt wear nothing that is ſuperfluous, nothing by which his rank and quality may be diſtinguiſhed from that of others.

This is the principle which one whole ſect has eſpouſed, and which a great many who have not wholly given up themſelves to that ſect, are yet unſatisfied about. But to ſhew the extreme abſurdity of it, there needs nothing more to be done, than only to name theſe following things: for to inſiſt largely on them in ſo plain a caſe, would be only to miſpend time.

(1.) Firſt of all, if this principle be admitted, we ſhall never be able to fix any certain boundaries or meaſures of what is lawful to chriſtians, and what is ſinful in them; and conſequently every man will be eternally entangled in ſcruples and perplexities, and there will be no cure for them. If a conformity to the modes and cuſtoms of the world be unlawful in all caſes, ſave only where that conformity is abſolutely neceſſary to our living in the world, then we cannot be certain but that every day we do that which is unlawful; for we are not ſure but that every day we have complied more with the cuſtoms of the world than was barely neceſſary. There are a hundred things which every man daily doth in compliance with the common uſages of mankind, which are

no ways needful to be done, and may, without any detriment to his life and fortunes, be as well done another way, but only that cuſtom prevails. Now, according to the aforeſaid principle, every ſuch action that a man doth, muſt be a ſin. But,

(2.) This is a principle which none of thoſe who ſtand up for it, no not the ſtricteſt of the Quakers themſelves do live up to. (Or if they did, they would be much more uncouth and ridiculous than they are.) They ſay we muſt not be conformable to the mode of the world, as to matter of apparel, for inſtance: But if this be a true rule, why do not they wear different ſort of cloaths from what they do? And ſince they will take their pattern from ſcripture, why do not they go in ſandals inſtead of ſhoes? why do not they wear long looſe veſtments, after the manner of the eaſtern nations. Both theſe are undoubtedly more agreeable to the practice of the ſaints, not only of the Old, but of the New-teſtament too. Again, if it be unlawful to comply with the times in the matter of cloaths and dreſs, why is it not as much unlawful to uſe the ſame way of eating and drinking that others do? How comes it to paſs that they dare uſe the poſture of ſitting when they take their meat, ſince that is the way of the world, and is quite different from that poſture that our Saviour and the chriſtians in his time uſed at meals; for their way then was to lean on couches or beds conveniently diſpoſed about the table: But this none of our moderns do obſerve, notwithſtanding their zeal and care to imitate the ſaints. And a hundred other things there are in which men muſt reform their manners if they will practiſe according to this principle, which yet none of them who contend for it do; and indeed, they are the wiſer for not doing it: But yet it is a ſhrewd argument either

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that they do not believe their own doctrine, or if they do, they think it impracticable.

(3.) But further: This principle that we ought not to be conformable to this world in any thing where we can avoid it, is ſo contradictory to the Spirit by which our Lord Jeſus and his apoſtles were acted, and according to which they practiſed, that nothing can be more. As for the apoſtles, they converſed with all men promiſcuouſly, and after their own way and mode, and one of them was openly reproved by St. Paul (Gal. ii. 14.) for not conforming himſelf to the Gentile way of converſation, when he came among the Gentiles, but ſticking too cloſely to that ſtingy principle of the Jews, who, thinking themſelves more holy than the other nations were, would not join with them in the innocent freedom of a common table. And the ſame St. Paul declares, that he *became all things to all men, that by this means he might gain more ſouls*, 1 Cor. ix. 22. And it doth not appear, that ever the apoſtles, or the firſt chriſtians, made any ſcruples of accommodating themſelves to the guiſe and manner of the people they preached to; except only in things which were of themſelves unlawful, and contrary to the religion which they were to preach.——As to our Saviour, he was a perſon ſo far from being moroſe or reſerved in his carriage, or a lover of ſingularity, ſo far from ſetting up a way of converſation of his own making, diſtinct from the way he found in the world, that he was the moſt free, obliging, and civil, and, if I durſt uſe the word, I would ſay, the moſt complaiſant perſon that ever perhaps appeared in the world. Both his language and way of converſe, as alſo his garb and attire, and the whole manner of his carriage and behaviour, was perfectly the ſame with that of the country in which he dwelt: which thing I wiſh

were well conſidered by thoſe we have to deal with; for if they did ſeriouſly mind it, they would from hence rather draw an argument that we at this day ought to comply in theſe things with the cuſtoms of the place where we live, becauſe our bleſſed Lord did ſo, than conclude from his way of ſpeaking, and carriage, and garb, that we are in this age and in this country preciſely to imitate him in thoſe particulars. If he in all theſe things conformed himſelf to the mode of the country, then in reaſon we ought to conform ourſelves to the mode of ours, and in ſo doing we ſhall more truly follow his example. By theſe light ſtrictures I have made it ſufficiently appear, that it is a very abſurd principle, that in all things, where we may, we are bound to frame our converſation in a way different from the cuſtoms of the world, and therefore my firſt propoſition ſtands good, that no man is bound to differ from the world merely for difference ſake.

2dly. But now for a more direct reſolution of the queſtion we are upon; *viz.* What kind of conformity to the world is allowable to chriſtians, I lay down this ſecond propoſition, That, generally ſpeaking, it is not only lawful, but expedient and adviſeable, that in things which are not by the law of God forbidden us, either in general or in particular, we ſhould in ſuch things frame our converſation according to the courſe of the world. This, I ſay, is the moſt general rule, and the practice of it is both lawful and expedient. Firſt of all it is lawful. This appears from the very terms of the propoſition, which ſuppoſeth, that the thing to which we conform is not forbidden by any law. And certainly, whatever is not forbidden by a law, may lawfully be practiſed. And that likewiſe ſuch kind of conformity is generally and for the moſt part adviſe-

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able and expedient, appears from theſe two things; firſt, that otherwiſe we ſhall bring a great many needleſs troubles and inconveniencies upon ourſelves by ſwimming againſt the common ſtream, and yet reap nothing from hence but the reputation of fantaſticalneſs and ſingularity; which reputation no wiſe man would much covet, or indeed endure, if he could help it: But ſecondly, by not practiſing this rule of compliance with cuſtom, we ſhall do a great prejudice and diſſervice to the chriſtian religion, by poſſeſſing men with an ill opinion of it. Our moroſeneſs and ſingularity in our way of living will be apt to fright all thoſe we converſe with from the application of themſelves to piety and devotion. If a man cannot live a religious life, and ſerve God, without living contrary to the reſt of mankind, without quitting all thoſe liberties and compliances which have always by the moſt ſober part of mankind been thought to be innocent, who will have the courage to ſet upon religion? Men will neceſſarily be tempted either to believe that this religion of Chriſt's is not the true religion; or if it be, that it is ſo hard and ſevere a one, that there is no venturing upon it.

But thus much concerning our firſt point, what kind of conformity to the world is allowable to chriſtians.

II. I now proceed to the ſecond; What kind of conformity to the world is here forbidden.——But concerning this we need not make any words; for having ſeen what conformity is lawful and allowable, we eaſily may perceive what that is which is unlawful and forbidden; *viz.* all compliances with the cuſtoms of this world which are ſinful and repugnant to the precepts of our Lord, how much ſoever they are in vogue. I ſay, all that kind of compliance is here forbidden us. In every age there always hath been, and will be, ſome

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ſins that are in faſhion; ſome cuſtoms which, by reaſon of their commonneſs and the countenance that is given them by thoſe whom we are moſt apt to propoſe for our examples, are not only accounted no ſins at all, tho' they be really great ones, but get reputation in the world, are thought very decent and commendable. Now as to ſuch as theſe every chriſtian is infinitely concern'd more eſpecially to watch over himſelf, that he be not carried away with the common ſtream; that the cuſtomarineſs of the things, and the approbation and encouragement that they receive from the men of the world, be not a ſnare to him to go and do likewiſe. And certainly there are great temptations to a man to practiſe that which he ſees the generality of thoſe he converſeth with not only to practiſe, but to applaud. But here lies the chriſtian magnanimity: If we will approve ourſelves to Jeſus Chriſt as his true diſciples, we muſt not deſert our ſtation, or in the leaſt depart from thoſe laws he hath ſet us, though the whole world ſet us a contrary example. Be a thing never ſo modiſh, never ſo univerſally practiſed, never ſo creditable, yet, if it be ſinful, if it contradict that chriſtianity we are all ſworn to, we muſt abſtain, we muſt not comply, we *muſt obey God, rather than* conform to *man.* This, without doubt, is the meaning of thoſe frequent precepts we meet with in the New-teſtament of dying to the world, of crucifying the world, and of not framing our converſation according to the faſhion of this world. And this likewiſe is all that is meant by that promiſe we all make in our baptiſm, *to renounce all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.* It is not hereby meant that we ſhould quit every thing that is accounted brave, or ſplendid, or glorious, or magnificent in the world; No, every thing that attracts the eyes of ordinary ſpectators is not

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a pomp; neither is every thing that doth not tend to ſpiritual edification a vanity, in the ſenſe of pomps and vanities, which we renounce in our baptiſmal vow; but only ſuch pomps and vanities as are contradictory to the laws of the goſpel, that is to ſay, are either in their own nature ſinful, or do miniſter to ſin. The truth is, theſe words, when they were firſt put into the baptiſmal vow, had a particular reſpect to the heathen ſhews and ſpectacles, which were made in their theatres in honour of their idols. And the manner of them was this: There was, beſides the ſhews themſelves, (which were indeed barbarous and inhuman, as well as impious, the whole buſineſs being the fighting of men with beaſts, and with one another, and the repreſentations of the lewd and ridiculous actions of their poetical Gods: I ſay, beſides theſe ſhews themſelves, there was alſo) a ſolemn proceſſion of their idols, which went before the ſhews, and were to uſher them in; that is, there was a long train of the images of their Gods carried through the ſtreets, and attended with great devotion by all the multitude: And this is that which the firſt chriſtians called the pomp of this world. And for a man to be preſent either at theſe ſhews, or the proceſſions that went before them, was always held a thing utterly inconſiſtent with chriſtianity. This ſeems to be the primary notion of the pomps which chriſtians were to renounce at their baptiſm, if we may believe thoſe who have the moſt accurately treated of thoſe matters.

Whether the repreſentations which are made in our days upon the ſtage, do fall under the notion of thoſe pomps we have now ſpoken of, is a point which I think needs not much be diſputed. The repreſentations and ſpectacles of the heathens were upon a religi-

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ous account; they were designed in honour of their Gods, and were a part of the idolatrous worship which obtained among them. But I believe it will easily be granted, that none frequent our theatres upon account of serving any ends of religion, or doing any honour either to the true God or the false ones. But though it be granted, that our shews are not of the nature of those among the pagans, being no ways design'd for the promoting of an idol worship, and consequently that they do not fall under the precise notion of the pomps of the world, as the first christians understood that term: yet if it do appear that they minister to vice and sin, if they tend to the debauching mens manners, if they promote wantonness and luxury, if they insinuate into the minds of the spectators principles of atheism or irreligion; I say, if these be the effects of them, though they are not strictly the pomps of the ancient world, yet they are justly to be stiled the pomps of the present, and by parity of reason are to be abandoned by the present christians, as much as those were by the primitive. But whether they be of this nature, or do directly or necessarily tend to the production of such effects, let those who know them best determine. If they do not, I have nothing to say to them. But this by the by.

That which I was saying is, That a christian's not being conformed to the world, or to the pomps and vanities of it, doth in general consist in not complying with those sinful customs and usages, which do generally obtain in the times and places in which he lives, of what kind soever they be. The precept is levelled against the prevailing fashionable sins of every country, which are various, according to the different ages, and the different climates of the world; so that every one is

to make an application of the precept to himſelf, according to the times and places in which he lives.

Now to make ſome kind of application of it to us at this time: To name ſome particular inſtances in which this precept of not conforming to the world doth more eſpecially ſeem to concern us of this nation, is the third head which I propoſed to inſiſt upon.

III. And God knows, there are two many inſtances of ſins, and great ones too, fit to be taken notice of, which, thro' the prevalency of cuſtom and ill example are become modiſh and faſhionable, even to that degree, that they are accounted creditable amongſt many, and venial by the moſt. Oh! that every one of us would ſeriouſly lay theſe to heart, and whenever we remember our vow of renouncing the world, and not being conformed to it, would ſeriouſly think ourſelves concerned to avoid theſe ſins eſpecially! I ſhall name ſome of them, and think it very proper and ſeaſonable to inſiſt a little upon them.

1. The firſt is profane ſwearing in our ordinary converſation, which is ſo cuſtomary, that for a man to uſe it, is accounted no diſparagement to him: Nay, it is even thought by ſome perſons ornamental. It is made the ſeaſoning of their diſcourſe: It ſupplies the place both of wit and courage, and of truth too. Yet there is nothing more expreſly forbid by the laws of our Saviour, nor any thing that is more unreaſonable in itſelf, nor from whence either leſs pleaſure or leſs advantage doth ariſe to them who uſe it.

2. Another vice, which by reaſon of its commonneſs hath almoſt loſt all diſrepute among us, and among ſome is paſſed into credit, is revelling and drunkenneſs. A ſin ſo odious to God, that it is put into the black catalogue of thoſe vices, which *whoſoever lives in, ſhall*

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not enter into the kingdom of God, Gal. v. 21. and 1 Cor. vi. 10. And yet ſo frequently, and with ſo little ſcandal is it practiſed in our days, that buſineſs can ſcarce be diſpatched, or any mirth or ſociety made without it. And the worſt cenſure that a man ordinarily undergoes for it, is, that he is a man of a free humour, an honeſt-hearted, good-natured companion, and one who is the greateſt enemy to himſelf. As to this, we ought to learn wiſdom, even from ſome of thoſe nations of Europe, whom we ſhould be loth to imitate in other matters. How lewd and diſſolute ſoever they may be in other reſpects, yet this ſottiſh vice is generally abhorred by them. And a man who is found guilty of it, ſhall undergo as ſevere a penance for it from his ſpiritual guide, as for the greateſt of crimes.

3. And this gives us occaſion, in the third place, to name another ſin among us, which is grown ſo common, that it ought to be cautioned againſt, as one of the prevailing modiſh ſins of this age, *viz.* the ſin of lewdneſs and uncleanneſs. It is a very ſad conſideration, that we ſhould be ſo far degenerated from the ſeverity and honeſty of our forefathers, that that vice, which was heretofore accounted foreign to us, and proper to the ſouthern climates, ſhould not only find entertainment among us, but thrive and propagate as fruitfully as it doth among them. They yet keep our ſins out from among them (namely, thoſe of exceſſive eating and drinking, as I now ſaid:) But we not only preſerve our own ſins, but to increaſe our condemnation, have taken in their ſins too. I fear this is not ſpoken without ground; for any one that lives among us, and hears what a ſlight matter is every day made of purſuing unlawful love, and how trifling a buſineſs even adultery itſelf is accounted, will be convinced that

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we are grown to a ſtrange pitch of debauchery as to this point. The ſenſe of juſtice, and faith, and charity, is ſo far loſt among us, that an adulterous love is ſo far from being puniſhed, ſo far from being deteſted and branded, as it ſhould be, that it is only made a buſineſs of laughter and merriment. As for that which they call ſimple fornication, it is by many, and by ſuch too as would be thought chriſtians, doubted whether it be a ſin or no. Will not God viſit for theſe things? Will he not ſome time or other call us to a ſad account for this open and ſcandalous violation and deffance of his moſt ſacred fundamental laws, by which the world is governed and doth ſubſiſt? There is not a ſerious writer among any of the pagans, whoever excuſed ſuch things, much leſs juſtified them: And ſhall we chriſtians dare to do it? Oh! that we would all ſeriouſly conſider what St. Paul ſays in his 6th chapter of the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, verſe 9. *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, ſhall ever enter into the kingdom of God.* So far is he from accounting fornication, of what kind ſoever it be, a ſlight buſineſs, that he tells us plainly, it is the ſin which moſt of all unhallows and defiles our bodies, which are conſecrated by our chriſtianity to be the temples of the Holy Ghoſt; ver. 15, 16, 17. and doth ſo alienate the Holy Spirit from us, that he will no longer dwell with us, as we have it in the ſame chapter. Nay, ſo ſevere he is againſt this vice in any one who calls himſelf a chriſtian, that he chargeth the Corinthians, *not to have any comunication, no not ſo much as to eat with any brother who is guilty of it*, 1 Cor. v. 11. And as for the primitive church, wherein the religion of Chriſt was moſt purely taught and obſerved, ſo great an abhorrence had they of theſe crimes, that

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even for one act of fornication a man was excluded from the congregation of the faithful, and not admitted again to their communion, but after a very long and severe penance. And as for the sin of adultery, that was a sin of so heinous a nature, that it was a very great question in some churches, whether any christian who was guilty of it should ever again be restored to the peace of the church.

4. Another reigning sin among us, and which ought not, upon this occasion, to be pass'd by without some animadversion, is, the general (unconcernedness shall I say? or the) contempt of religion, and things sacred, which is every where to be seen. We are grown so lukewarm and so indifferent as to these matters, which yet are our greatest concern in this world, that we can patiently hear religion affronted and run down; nay, it is well if we ourselves do not sometimes cast in our mite to the lessening and exposing of it. What is become of that face of devotion that heretofore was to be seen in families, and in private conversation too? Where is that care to read God's word, and to teach it to our children and servants, and to perform the duties of devotion both at church and in our own houses, that was practised in former times? Far am I here from commending the late times, when a great many made a great appearance of religion, and yet acted upon such principles as were contrary to all religion. And far am I from giving the least countenance either to such kind of principles, or to such kind of actions. But this I am afraid is true, that our zeal for the outward service of God, and the public profession of religion, is much abated, and that we are not so strict in these matters as we ought to be, nor as we have been. And let them who kept up the external and visible characters

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of religion have been otherwiſe never ſo bad, and never ſo hypocritical, yet we have a ſad account to make for our open profaneneſs. Hypocriſy and profaneneſs, I think, are both equally damnable to the perſon who is guilty of them. But yet it is certain to the public it doth leſs hurt to be ſtrict in the outward profeſſion of religion (though in a wrong way, and to ſerve ſecular ends) than it doth to neglect or to deſpiſe religion, and to live without any regard, or even pretences to it. This latter will, without doubt, ſooner draw down the judgment of God upon a people. Let all of us therefore, who have any concernment for our ſouls; or if we have not for them, yet who have any concernment for the peace and ſafety of the kingdom where we live, take eſpecial care to own God and his religion in all our converſation. Let us not be ſo fooliſh as to forſake it, or ſo timorous as to be rallied out of our profeſſion of it by the drollery of atheiſtical men. I am confident there are abundance more in this nation, who have a hearty ſenſe of the truth of religion, than there are who have not. And is it not a pity that the impudence of a leſſer party, who have a very bad cauſe, a cauſe condemned by all laws, and all good men, who have ever been in the world, ſhould either affright or aſhame, or any ways put out of countenance the practice of thoſe men, who, as they have the beſt cauſe in the world, ſo are they more in number. It is really our timorouſneſs, and eaſineſs, and deſire to comply with the humour of our acquaintance, that makes many of us ſo little careful of God's worſhip as we are. We have, many of us, better principles in our hearts, than we dare own in our converſation. Is not this a fearful reproach to us? But let us remember what our Saviour hath ſaid, *He that confeſſeth me before men, him will*

will I confeſs before my Father which is in heaven, Matt. x. 32, 33. *But he that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father, and before the angels of God*, Luke xii. 8, 9.

5. Since we are ſpeaking of the prevailing ſins of the age, we ought not to conceal another thing, which, by reaſon of its great commonneſs, is accounted either no ſin at all, or a very ſlight one; and that is, the great liberty we take in diſcourſing of, ſcanning and cenſuring other mens actions, the boldneſs we make with our neighbour's reputation and good name; taking pleaſure in expoſing them, and telling ſtories to their diſadvantage. This is ſo much in uſe, that it is the entertainment of moſt converſations. We can hardly find talk enough to furniſh out the civility of a viſit, but at the coſt of other perſons. If they be not the ſubject of our diſcourſe, how many of us are there who have nothing to ſay? Nor is it the cuſtom to ſpare any, but to talk as freely of public perſons, and to cenſure the adminiſtration of public affairs, as if the perſons were our own ſervants, or the affairs our own domeſtic concerns. But this is alſo one of the cuſtoms of the world, which by no means we ought to conform to; for it is againſt the genius and ſpirit of chriſtianity. It is contrary to that charity and kindneſs, to that modeſty and peaceableneſs which our Lord Jeſus hath obliged us to. His law has forbid us to *judge or cenſure others, leſt we be judged ourſelves*, Matt. vii. 1. And his apoſtle has given us in charge, that we ſhould *ſpeak evil of no man*, Tit. iii. 2. Jam. iv. 11. and therefore leaſt of all of thoſe who are in authority.

6. Another thing, which is not often taken notice of, but is really a conforming to the unlawful cuſtoms of the world, is vanity and exceſs in our apparel, or in the other

other outward circumſtances of our lives. The humour which moſt prevails is, to be as ſplendid and brave as we can: To carry it out with all the pomp and outward ſhew that our purſes can reach to; nay, often beyond that, both in our cloaths, our equipage, our attendants and entertainments, and the like: And all this, that we may be taken notice of by others, that we may make ſome figure in the world, as the word is. But we have all this while no regard either to the gravity of the chriſtian religion, or our own quality, or eſtate, or thoſe more neceſſary expences, which ought to be defray'd by us. This now is againſt the chriſtian law, and is a following the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, which we have renounced in our baptiſm. I deny not but every one may ſo far conform himſelf to the guiſe of the world, as to go in the ſame habit, and uſe the ſame way of living that others do; but then it is always to be remember'd, that there is a great deal of prudence to be uſed in theſe things. We ought to conſider our religion, which, by the nature and contrivance of it, is a grave, ſerious thing, and enjoins great modeſty and ſeverity as to our outward garb and behaviour; and therefore every thing about us that is looſe, that is undecent, that is light, that miniſters to pride, and luſt, and vanity, all that is perfectly abhorrent from it. We ought alſo to conſider the rank and quality in which we are in the world. As it is ſordid, and ſavours of an avaritious penurious ſpirit, to live below our rank; ſo to live above it, is an inſtance of luxury. And laſtly, in theſe things we are alſo to conſider our eſtate and fortune, and the neceſſary charges they are to ſupport. We are but ſtewards of God's bleſſings; and the main uſe he gave them us for, is, after our own neceſſities are ſupplied,

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to make provision for our children and our families, and to minister to the poor and needy. If therefore we spend our revenues in unnecessary finery and entertainments; if we put them upon our backs, or into our bellies; or if we throw them away in drink, or gaming, or in maintaining a needless pomp and grandeur among men, whilst our families are not duly provided for, nor the poor relieved, nor the public served by the wealth we are blessed with, what a sad account have we to make to God in the other world for these extravagancies!

7. But lastly, to conclude this head: Besides all the fashionable vices I have named, there is one more which ought by no means to be forgot upon this occasion, as being one of the forbidden customs of the world, which comes within the compass of my text; and that is, the practice of duelling, or fighting in private quarrels. A practice which, though both the laws of God and man forbid under the severest penalties, yet is still accounted so creditable, that he is no man of honour, who either dares not, upon any direct affront, send a challenge, or dares not accept one. It were heartily to be wish'd, that men would consider to what master they belong, and what religion they profess. Was this the spirit of our blessed Saviour, who came to give us an example? and whose example we must either follow, or we cannot be his disciples? Is this an imitation of his meekness, and patience, and gentleness, and charity, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not*, 1 Pet. 2, 23. *but willingly gave his back to the smiters*, Isai. l. 6. and instead of revenging himself on his enemies, as he easily might have done, *laid down his life for them?* And what is there which his religion doth more severely forbid, than this revenging

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of injuries in a private way; or doth more ſtrictly enjoin, than forbearance and forgiveneſs, even ſo ſtrictly, that we cannot, according to his religion, without hypocriſy, ſay our daily prayers, unleſs we be in charity with all the world?

Well; but a man's honour lies at ſtake, and for the ſaving of that a man muſt demand ſatisfaction when he is affronted, or he muſt give ſatisfaction when it is demanded. Why let it be ſo: But ſure there are other kinds of ſatisfaction both to be demanded and given beſides that of murdering one another, eſpecially in a civilized country, where the law hath provided for the reparation of all ſuch injuries as need reparation, and where the execution of vengeance is only entruſted in the hands of public authority. But ſuppoſe a man's honour cannot be ſaved this way, yet is it not very unreaſonable to prefer our honour before our chriſtianity? If our honour and our obedience to God muſt neceſſarily come into competition, ſurely we ſhould reſolve to part with that, and every other thing that is deareſt to us, rather than to depart from this. Oh! if men had any belief or conſideration of another world, when they engage in theſe kinds of actions, they would tremble to think what a deſperate venture they run. If either of the parties ſhould happen to die in the encounter, in what a diſmal condition are they both! the one in dying without repentance, with all his ſins about him; the other for being his murderer!

But after all, what is this honour, which we prize ſo much, that we will venture upon damnation, rather than it ſhall ſuffer? Is it not an unaccountable fancy without any foundation in reaſon or nature, taken up at firſt by boiſterous unthinking men, and afterwards as fooliſhly embraced by others? Sure I am, theſe notions

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of honour which obtain in the world, and which occasion these private quarrels, were never put into the minds of men by God Almighty, but are rather of the devil's devising, because they do so directly tend to make us of his spirit and temper. The natural notions of honour are of another strain. That man only, according to the measures of reason and nature, is a man of honour, who hates to do any thing that is mean and base, be it never so much for the gratifying his private interests or passions; and who hath such a quick and tender sense of virtue and goodness, that he always chuses to do the best, and the worthiest actions, without any respect to himself, or his private concernments. Now this is truly generous, and brave, and honourable, and all the world must acknowledge it so; for it is to act as God doth: it is to copy out his perfections, and to live up to the dignity of our nature. But now for a man to venture upon a bad and wicked action, an action that he knows his religion hath strictly forbidden; an action which, besides the ill consequences to his family, doth expose both his body and soul to destruction; and this too for no other reason, but to gratify a private, blind, impotent passion of his own, *viz*, either the passion of anger, that he may be revenged of his adversary; or, which is worse, the bare passion of fear, that he may not be thought a coward: I say, for a man upon such accounts to venture upon such an action, (and yet there is not a duel fought, but it is both such an action, and is undertaken upon such account) where is the sense of honour in this? Where is the bravery, and greatness, and magnanimity that is expressed? Certainly thus to act is so far from being an argument of a great and generous mind, that it rather shews a man to be of a mean, narrow, selfish, and contracted spirit.

I cannot indeed deny, but that there may be a great deal of courage expreſſed in theſe kinds of undertakings; but yet muſt ſay, it is a brutiſh courage, ſuch as is common to other animals of our climate as well as our men. But if indeed it be ſo abſolutely neceſſary to the preſervation of a man's honour and reputation, that he ſhould expreſs his courage and valour, I do believe that wiſe and good men may every day find occaſions enough of doing it, without ever putting themſelves to the trouble or the danger of fighting duels.

But thus much is ſufficient to have ſpoken as to the particular inſtances of faſhionable ſins which are here forbidden in the text, which was our third point. But it muſt be acknowledged that the prohibition in the text of not conforming to the world, may and ought to be extended further than to the cuſtoms of the world, which are plainly ſinful, and againſt the laws of God, ſuch as all thoſe are that I have hitherto mentioned. There are ſeveral other things which, though they are not perhaps againſt any expreſs command of God, yet it will be fit for ſober chriſtians to abſtain from them. And there are ſeveral things and cuſtoms likewiſe, which, tho' they may be lawful and innocent in themſelves, yet prove ſinful by accident, at ſome times, and in ſome circumſtances, and to ſome perſons; and yet at other times, and in other circumſtances, and to other perſons, they will not be ſo. Now, with reſpect to ſuch things and cuſtoms as theſe, I put our

IV. Fourth and laſt enquiry, *viz.* By what rules and meaſures we are to guide ourſelves in the matter of conformity to the world, that what is lawful in itſelf, may not become unlawful or ſinful to us.

And becauſe the circumſtances of things are infinite, all that I can do is to lay down three or four general rules for our converſation, to which we are to apply particulars, as they come in our way. I ſhall do little more than name them, and ſo conclude.

1. If we mean to live ſerious and conſcientious lives, and not to abuſe thoſe liberties which our religion allows us, it is fit that we ſhould abſtain from a conformity with the world to thoſe cuſtoms and practices, which, tho' they are not directly forbid by the letter of God's laws, yet are of ill fame and report among wiſe and good men. This is that which St. Paul obligeth chriſtians to, when he bids them *to provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men*, 2 Cor. viii. 21. By honeſt things he there means things that are decent and comely, and ſuch as no good perſon can juſtly take offence at. Again, in the Theſſalonians he bids chriſtians *to abſtain from all appearance of evil*, 1 Ep. v. 22. Any thing that looks like a ſin, or is ſo accounted by wiſe and conſcientious men, ſhould be forborne by chriſtians, unleſs there be great and urgent reaſons for the contrary. And accordingly as chriſtians are exhorted to purſue every thing that is *juſt, and good, and virtuous*, ſo are they every thing that *is laudable and of good report*, as the ſame apoſtle elſewhere ſpeaks (Phil. iv. 8.) Now nothing is of good report but what is thought well of, at leaſt thought innocent, by ſerious, prudent, and virtuous chriſtians. Tho' it paſſes never ſo currently, among ſome of our acquaintance, yet if it be of an ill name among thoſe whoſe judgments in point of prudence we ought moſt to ſet by in this matter, and whoſe examples we ought chiefly to follow, it is a ſufficient reaſon to make us forbear the practice of that thing, if we will act ſafely. It would be eaſy to name

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ſome practices too much in uſe among ſeveral of us, which, if this rule was obſerved, muſt neceſſarily be laid aſide.

2. A ſecond rule which I lay down is this: Thoſe innocent compliances with the world, which are unqueſtionably unlawful in themſelves, yet if they be practiſed by us out of ill deſigns; if by theſe compliances we mean to ſerve any ends of pride, or luſt, or ambition, or the like, they ceaſe to be innocent to us, and we are guilty thereby of an unlawful conformity to the world. The main thing in thoſe compliances that God looks upon, and that we ought to look upon alſo, is the inward principle of the heart from whence they proceed. If that be laudable and juſtifiable, the uſage is ſo likewiſe. But if we will follow the mode of the world to gratify ſome ill affection in us, the whole thing is naught; it is a *making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof*, Rom. xiii. 14.

3. In this kind of things there is great regard and conſideration to be had of our own tempers and inclinations. There are ſeveral things we might innocently enough comply with, and conform to the world in, if we had the perfect government of ourſelves. But yet the weakneſs of our tempers may be ſuch, that if we uſe theſe compliances, we ſhall be drawn into horrible great inconveniencies: We ſhall be betray'd into ſin, tho' we meant no ſuch thing. Now where we have ſuch experience of ourſelves, in this caſe it is adviſeable to abridge ourſelves even of our lawful liberties. Thus for inſtance, if we cannot adorn ourſelves, or wear rich cloaths, but we are in danger to think ourſelves the better for them, or to be drawn away to purſue ſome undecent deſign upon the account of them; if we cannot go into ſuch a ſort of company, but we are drawn into

intemperance, or fooliſh talking: If we cannot play at any innocent game, but we are apt either to be angry if we loſe, or to play for conſiderable ſums of money, or the like; in all theſe caſes it is the beſt wholly to forbear theſe things, and to deny ourſelves lawful liberties, that we may preſerve our innocency, and not engage in things unlawful.

4. To conclude: Though we may conform to the world in all lawful things, yet to make a conſtant practice of ſome things, which are lawful in themſelves, will become unlawful to us, and will prove ſuch a conformity to the world as is here forbidden. A thing may be done now and then that may be innocent enough, and we ſhall deſerve no blame for it. But if we make a common practice of the thing, ſo as to ſpend our time in the minding of it, to the neglect of other more neceſſary buſineſs, it will in this caſe be ſo far from being lawful, that it will be a grievous ſin in us. For inſtance, to uſe innocent paſtimes and recreations, to enjoy our friends, and make viſits, and the like, is not only allowable, but highly commendable: But yet to make a trade of theſe things, ſo wholly to give up ourſelves to them, as to ſpend moſt of our time in them, this is intolerable, and we ſhall be called to account for it in the other world. The reaſon of this is evident: The main buſineſs we have to do in this world, is to ſerve God, and benefit our neighbours, and to fit ourſelves for eternity. This is our great work, and all thoſe other things we are ſpeaking of, ought to be managed and ordered by us in ſubſervience thereunto; ſo that they may promote that great end, and no ways hinder it. But if we ſo place our affections, and beſtow our time upon them, that one would think we make them our great deſign, and not the other; then

then we cannot be innocent, but are horribly unjuſt both to God and our own ſouls.

Theſe are the general rules by which we ought to ſteer ourſelves in the practice of the apoſtle's precept of *not conforming to the world.* The farther applying them to particulars, is left to every one, as he finds himſelf concerned.

The ſum of all is, *We ſhould firſt ſeek the kingdom of God, and the righteouſneſs thereof*, Matt. vi. 33. and ſeriouſly endeavour in all our converſation to recommend ourſelves to our Lord and maſter, by a diligent obſervance of all his commands, and abſtaining from all the pollutions of the fleſh and the world. And as for thoſe gratifications and liberties that our religion allows us, we ſhould, as to them, *uſe the world*, as *tho' we uſed it not*; taking them only by way of convenience and accommodation for our more eaſy paſſage through this world into the other.

DISCOURSE IX.

Our obligations to live as CHRIST lived.

[Delivered in four Sermons.]

1 PET. ii. 21. (latter part of the verſe.)

Leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps.

THE whole verſe runs thus: *For even hereunto were ye called, becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuffered for us, leaving us an example*, &c.

St. Peter here is exhorting ſervants to be ſubject to their maſters, and with patience and ſubmiſſion to bear whatever hard uſage they might meet with from them. And the argument wherewith he enforceth this exhortation is the example of Chriſt. He patiently for our ſakes underwent a great load of ſufferings, and therefore highly reaſonable it is that we ſhould not repine at any hard meaſures we meet with in the world. The force and ſtrength of this argument lies in that which St. Peter addeth in the laſt part of this verſe, namely, that

that Christ's life was framed for our example; that it was design'd to be a pattern for christians to walk by, and that we are all of us bound to follow his steps, He *left us an example*, &c.

This point of the example of Christ is that I have now design'd to treat of; and in speaking to it I shall not restrain it to one instance, that of his sufferings; (nor indeed do St. Peter's words so restrain it, though it must be granted he brings it in upon that occasion) but I shall consider it in its full latitude with respect to his whole life and conversation in the world.

And in treating of this argument I shall endeavour these three things:

I. First of all in general, To shew the great obligation that lies upon all christians to follow Christ's example.

II. Secondly, To explain the extent of this obligation; How far, and in what instances Christ's life is an example to us, and doth oblige us to imitation.

III. Thirdly, To propose some of those virtues that our Saviour was most eminent for, and which are of the greatest use in human life, and seriously to recommend them to your imitation.

I begin with the first thing, the obligation that lies upon christians to follow Christ's example. And this shall be my argument at this time.

And I think it the more needful to be insisted on in regard of a notion that some people are too forward to entertain, which asserts, that the life of Christ was not design'd for an example to us, but for a means to procure God's acceptance of us. They explain their mind thus: No man can be accepted by God, and entitled to his favour, unless he be perfectly righteous in the eye of God. Now to make a man so, he must either have a perfect inherent righteousness of his own,

or the perfect righteousness of another must be imputed to him, as to all intents and purposes to be made his own, and to be look'd upon as such. The former sort of righteousness no man can pretend to; nor is he obliged to have it under the second covenant. The latter sort of righteousness therefore is that we must rely upon, and by which we are to expect to be justified. Now this is no other than the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who only was perfectly righteous: This righteousness of his being made ours, being imputed to us, is that that must make us perfectly righteous in the sight of God. As therefore the end of Christ's death was to satisfy for the breach of God's laws in our stead, we having all sinned and so deserved God's wrath; so the end of his life was actually to fulfil the law in our stead, that we might be accounted righteous before God, as if we had fulfilled it ourselves. As his passive obedience, his death and sufferings, were designed for this end to be imputed to all believers, for the excusing them from the punishment due to their sins; so his active obedience, the righteousness of his life, was designed for this end to be imputed to all believers to make them appear righteous before God, though they were not righteous in their own persons. Now the instrument, say they, whereby this righteousness, this obedience of Christ, both active and passive, is made ours; the hand that conveys it to us, is no other than a lively faith; that is in their sense, a believing in Jesus Christ, a disclaiming all our own righteousness, and confidently applying his righteousness to ourselves. And whoever doth this, is, in God's account, a righteous man without more ado, having all Christ's righteousness so imputed to him as to be made his own.

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This is a ſcheme of chriſtian religion that ſome men have laid down to themſelves; and if it be a true one, then what becomes of the exemplarity of Chriſt's life? what becomes of our obligations to walk as he walketh? Why verily it all falls to the ground. For ſince (according to this hypotheſis) the very deſign of Chriſt's life was to fulfil all righteouſneſs; and all that righteouſneſs of his is made ours by faith; what need can there be of our fulfilling the ſame righteouſneſs over again, by endeavouring to copy out Chriſt's example in our lives? I own that a great many good men may have been bred up in the uſe of ſuch expreſſions as theſe that I have now been mentioning, but yet abhor the conſequences that I would draw from them: For all that they mean by Chriſt's righteouſneſs being imputed to us, and made ours, is no more than this, that we are juſtified and accepted by God purely and ſolely for the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, and that not for any righteouſneſs of our own. But they own nevertheleſs that we are all bound, nay even under pain of damnation, to endeavour as much as we can to be virtuous in our perſons, and to imitate our bleſſed Lord in all the inſtances of virtue and holineſs that he hath ſet before us. Now if this be all their meaning, God forbid that any man ſhould open his mouth againſt it; for it is undoubtedly the ſcripture doctrine, though the words whereby they expreſs their meaning are very improper and unſcriptural. But I would never diſpute with any one about words, where we agree in the ſenſe. That which I oppoſe, and which all men, that have any regard to the honour of the goſpel, and the intereſt of ſouls, muſt be concerned to oppoſe, is the Antinomian principle, that is to ſay, that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt's life is ſo imputed to believers, as to ſerve inſtead of their own

righteouſneſs; that Chriſt's perfect obedience to the moral law hath diſcharged us from all obligation to the obſervance of it. So that provided we do apply this his obedience, this his righteouſneſs to ourſelves by faith, there is no need of our being righteous as he was righteous, and framing our lives after his holy example. This, I ſay, is both an abſurd and a pernicious doctrine, and not to be endured among chriſtians.

If I ſhould ſet myſelf to ſhew you this at large, and expoſe this doctrine in all the parts and conſequences of it, and to ſhew how contradictory it is to the account which the ſcriptures give of this matter, I ſhould ſpend more of my time, and of your patience, than I am now willing to do. And therefore I will only remark two things concerning it, and which are very obvious:

Firſt, It ſuppoſes Chriſt not to have performed that which he came into the world to do. Secondly, it ſuppoſeth that he came into the world with a very ill deſign.

Firſt, I ſay, this doctrine diſparageth Chriſt's undertaking, and ſuppoſeth him not to have done that which he came into the world to do. For did not our bleſſed Saviour come into the world for this end, that he might redeem us from all evil and miſery, and put us into a ſtate of real happineſs? There is no body doubts of it. And now is not a ſtate of ſin and wickedneſs a ſtate of ſlavery to the devil and our own luſts, and a very great evil? Nay, is it not the greateſt evil in the world? No body, that hath any ſerious ſenſe of things, will deny it. But now, according to the aforeſaid doctrine, that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is ſo imputed to believers, that they are thereby accounted righteous without being ſo in their own perſons; and that this is all the righteouſneſs required to qualify us for heaven: I ſay, according

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to this doctrine, after all that Christ hath done or suffered for believers, they may remain in this evil state for ever; they may continue all their lives long under the tyranny of vicious habits, and be perfect bondmen to the devil, (if vile affections and lusts can make a man so) and go so into the other world. Christ hath indeed by his death delivered them from his Father's wrath, and the outward punishment they were obnoxious to for their sins; and he hath likewise by his life covered them over with an external robe of righteousness. But still, for any thing he hath done to the contrary, that venomous nature of theirs may still remain, and they may carry it with them into heaven, where, notwithstanding all the glories they may be presumed to be encircled with, it will be a plague and a torment to them for ever. Either therefore Christ must be supposed to have intended the destroying of all sin and naughtiness out of men, as well as that it should not be imputed to them; to have meant the furnishing their souls with an inward real righteousness and purity of their own, as well as the cloathing them with a righteousness of his; or else he hath but done them half that kindness which he pretended to have designed them when he came into the world: He is but half a physician; he hath palliated our sores and our diseases, but he hath not removed them.

But, secondly, The doctrine that asserts that the life of our Saviour was not design'd for an example to us, but to be a fulfilling of the law for us, so that thereby we are excused from our obedience to it; the doctrine that asserts that the righteousness of Christ's life is made so much ours by faith, that we need not conform ourselves thereto in our practice, doth not only render Christ imperfect or unsuccessful in his undertaking, which

which was that I said before; but, which is far worse, makes it look as if he came into the world with a very ill design. This is a most blasphemous consequence, but really it cannot be avoided; for let any man say, suppose a man had really a design to serve the interests of the devil's kingdom, and to promote and encourage all sorts of vice, and wickedness, and debauchery in the world; how could he do it more effectually than by this method, namely, to possess the world that he was sent from God, and that he was sent with this intent, that by the innocency of his life he might make amends for the wickedness of theirs? that all his virtue, and good qualities, and laudable deeds should be as much theirs, and they should be as much rewarded for them, as if they had done them themselves, tho' in the mean time they did not one of them, nor any thing like them; and that all the crimes they should commit, should be put to his account, and they should never answer for them, he having once for all paid the general score of the sins of mankind. Only this condition he strictly required, that they should firmly believe all this; that they should with the greatest confidence and assurance imaginable, apply all those benefits, all those privileges to themselves; that they should from their very hearts disclaim all good deeds of their own, and throw away every rag of their own righteousness, and shrowd themselves entirely under the robes of his righteousness. If they did but this, all was safe, nothing should hurt them; no sin, no habits of sin, tho' never repented of, should do them mischief. On the contrary, if they thought of any other terms of obtaining God's favour, they were under a great and dangerous mistake. I say, how could any man do a greater disservice to all piety and virtue, and all the interests of

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true religion? How could any man take a more effectual courſe to deſtroy the fear of God from among men, and to let in a flood of impiety and wickedneſs to over-ſpread the earth, than to preach ſuch a doctrine as this, ſuppoſing he had the means to make himſelf believed? And yet, according to the principles before laid down, ſuch as this in effect muſt be the doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour. I dare ſay, there is none that calls himſelf a chriſtian, can be ſo bad as to own theſe conſequences; but yet I do not ſee how the Antinomian doctrine in this matter can be acquitted of them.

Well; but it will be ſaid, Are there not texts of ſcripture that do plainly ſeem to countenance this Antinomian doctrine, as you call it? Doth not St. Paul ſay, that *to all believers their faith is imputed for righteouſneſs without works?* And doth not the ſame St. Paul ſay, That *he deſires not to be found in his own righteouſneſs, but in the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith?* What will you ſay to theſe texts?

Why, I ſay, give me but leave to lay theſe texts fairly before you, and then you yourſelves ſhall judge whether they make any thing for the doctrine I am now diſputing againſt. I am indeed the more willing to take theſe two texts into conſideration, becauſe thoſe I am now dealing with have them always in their mouths, and do in a manner lay the whole ſtreſs of their cauſe upon them.

The firſt text is in Rom. chap. iv. ver. 22. There St. Paul tells us, that Abraham's faith *was imputed to him for righteouſneſs*; and that *it was not written for his ſake alone, that it was ſo imputed to him, but for us alſo, to whom it ſhall be imputed, if we believe on him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead.*

Now

Now from this text, ſay they, it is plain, that faith is imputed to all chriſtians for their righteouſneſs: Nay, more than that, the apoſtle tells us in the ſixth verſe of this very chapter, that *the bleſſedneſs of chriſtians is deſcribed by this, that righteouſneſs is imputed to them without works.* So that here is a righteouſneſs imputed, and a righteouſneſs imputed without works: How then dare we ſpeak any thing againſt an imputed righteouſneſs?

I anſwer, nobody, that I know of, ſpeaks any thing againſt imputed righteouſneſs in the apoſtle's ſenſe, but only againſt Chriſt's righteouſneſs, and virtue, and innocence, and holy converſation, being ſo imputed to us, as that there is no need of our righteouſneſs, and virtue, and innocence, and holy converſation, which I am ſure was not the apoſtle's ſenſe, nor ever entered into his mind. But I pray conſider this text a little more narrowly, and be not carried away by the ſound of a word. St. Paul here tells us, that Abraham's faith *was accounted to him for righteouſneſs*, in the 3d verſe. In the fifth verſe, that *it was reckoned to him for righteouſneſs*. And in the 22d verſe, that *it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs*. All theſe phraſes mean the ſame thing. But is it here ſaid, or is it ſaid any where elſe, that Chriſt's righteouſneſs was reckoned, or counted, or imputed to Abraham for righteouſneſs? Nay, is it ſaid any where in the whole ſcripture, that Chriſt's obedience or righteouſneſs ſhould be accounted or imputed to any men in the world for their own righteouſneſs? Not a word of it. There is a vaſt difference (if any body will mind) between theſe two propoſitions or expreſſions; *To a true believer his faith is reckoned or imputed for righteouſneſs*; and this, *To a true believer the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is reckoned and imputed*

imputed for his righteouſneſs. I ſay there is a vaſt difference between theſe two propoſitions: The meaning of the former is, that under the covenant of grace (which was procured by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt) God is pleaſed to accept of a true ſincere faith inſtead of a perfect obedience to the law. Whoſoever truly believes in Jeſus Chriſt, and ſhews forth the fruits of his faith, by a ſincere, though not perfect, obedience to God's commandments, as Abraham did (and without this his faith is not a true faith) ſuch a man is juſtified, is accounted righteous before God, as much as if he had performed all the righteouſneſs of the law of works: His faith is accounted to him for righteouſneſs.

But when we ſay that Chriſt's righteouſneſs is imputed to us, as if it was our righteouſneſs, (which is the other propoſition) it is capable of no other meaning but this; That upon account of Chriſt's obedience to God's laws, God will account us righteous, as much as if we had obeyed them ourſelves. The holineſs of his life is ſo made ours by imputation, that God eſteems us holy perſons upon the account thereof, tho' we are not really ſo in our own perſons.

The former propoſition, of faith being imputed for righteouſneſs, is certainly true, and I know no chriſtians that deny it.

But the latter propoſition, of Chriſt's righteouſneſs being imputed to us, hath no foundation in ſcripture: Nay, it is certainly not true in that ſenſe of the words that the natural proper grammatical conſtruction of them leads to. And thus much for the firſt text.

Well then, (ſaith the objector) it ſeems you plead for a righteouſneſs of your own, diſtinct from Chriſt's righteouſneſs. I muſt confeſs we do ſo. What then? Why, ſays he, that other text of St. Paul will for ever confute

confute and quash all such pretensions; for doth not he in the 3d of the Philippians, ver. 8, (which is the other text I am to consider) doth not he there expressly say, *I count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord*; and I desire to be found in him not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is thro' the faith of Christ, the righteousness of which is of God by faith? Doth not St. Paul here expressly declare against and renounce all righteousness of his own? I grant he doth so. But what then? If you will seriously mind what kind of righteousness of his own he here declares against, and what righteousness that is which he desires to be possessed of, you will certainly be convinced that he is so far from opposing our doctrine, that he earnestly pleads for that righteousness we are all this while contending for.

Let us look a little back into the occasion and scope of these words. His design is, in this chapter, to set forth the excellency of the christian religion above the jewish, and to shew how mean, nay, how altogether insignificant all those things the Jews so much gloried in, were, in comparison of christianity. And he here reckons up all the magnificent things they boasted of, and wherein they placed their righteousness, and tells us, that upon those accounts he had as much reason to be confident of his own estate towards God, as any of them had. *If any other man* (saith he in the 4th ver.) *thinketh he hath wherein he might trust in the flesh, I have more. I was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. As touching the law, I was a pharisee* (which was the strictest sect among the Jews) *and as for my zeal in the law, I was a persecutor of the church*, (than which nothing could be more meritorious among the Jews) *and as for the right-*

righteouſneſs which is by the law, I was blameleſs: There was no man could ſay but that I lived up to the precepts of the law of Moſes, and was blameleſs in my converſation, as far as the letter of it required. But what, after all this, ſhould I plead my confidence in any of theſe things? *No, verily,* (as he goes on in the 7th verſe) *but thoſe things which were gain to me, I accounted loſs for Chriſt:* That is to ſay, all theſe prerogatives, my birth, my profeſſion, my ſect, my reputation, my ſtrict way of living, which might be thought to be of great advantage to me; now that I am come to the knowledge of Chriſt, I abandon them all; I ſee that they are nothing worth; nay, I account them as a loſs, as things like to be rather a hindrance to me, than a gain. *Yea, doubtleſs,* (as he goes on in the next verſe) *I account all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and I account them but dung that I may win Chriſt.* And then comes in the verſe that I am now concerned with, *That I might be found in him, not having my own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.*

This is the paſſage that is brought to eſtabliſh the doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs. This is the text that doth ſo utterly blaſt all righteouſneſs of our own.

I pray mind what ſort of righteouſneſs of our own that is which St. Paul here would not be found in. Is it not the legal phariſaical righteouſneſs? Is it not the righteouſneſs which is by the law? Are not theſe his very words?

I pray mind what righteouſneſs that is that he would be found in. Is it not that righteouſneſs which is by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt? He doth not ſay the right-

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eouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt: It is not that that he wou
be found in; (if he had ſaid ſo, that indeed had be
to the purpoſe) but that righteouſneſs which is by t
faith of Jeſus Chriſt, that is to ſay, that righteouſne
which is to be obtained by believing in Jeſus Chri
by becoming a chriſtian. Certain it is, that St. Pa
doth not here oppoſe an inherent righteouſneſs to a
imputed one; but an outward natural righteouſnef
to that which is inward and wrought in a man by th
Spirit of God. The righteouſneſs that he would b
found in, is not the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, made hi
or imputed to him; but it is a righteous, holy ſtate c
ſoul, wrought in him by the Spirit of God, through th
faith of Jeſus Chriſt.

The clear ſenſe then of theſe words is this; That which above all things I deſire is, to be found in Chriſt that is, to be a true diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt: not having my own righteouſneſs, which is by the law; that is to ſay, not being content with thoſe outward privileges, and that outward obedience which by my own natura ſtrength I am able to yield to the precepts of the law; (which is that righteouſneſs in which the Jews place al their confidence, and by which they expect to be juſtified before God) but that which is by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt: that is, the righteouſneſs which I deſire, and in which only I ſhall have the confidence to appear before God, is, that inward ſpiritual obedience to his laws, which he doth require as the terms and conditions of his favour and acceptance, and which I can never attain to, but by the faith of Chriſt, by becoming a chriſtian. This is none of my own righteouſneſs, but the righteouſneſs of God, as being revealed from heaven by Jeſus Chriſt, and wrought in me by God's Spirit accompanying the preaching of the goſpel. And as it

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is his gift, ſo he will own it, and reward it at the laſt day. I will appeal to any man that will carefully read this whole paſſage, whether he muſt not in his conſcience believe that this account I have given is the true ſenſe and importance of the apoſtle's words. And now, whether they make any thing againſt our being righteous and holy, as well as Chriſt was righteous and holy, againſt the neceſſity of walking as Chriſt walked, do ye judge.

But I am ſenſible I have made too long a digreſſion upon theſe two texts. But I thought it worth the while to give a plain account of them. I now return to my argument: And that which I have farther to ſay upon it, ſhall be diſpatch'd in a few words.

My buſineſs is to preſs upon you the obligation and neceſſity of following Chriſt's example, if we would approve ourſelves chriſtians: And in order thereunto, beſides what I have before ſaid, I would deſire you to take into your conſideration theſe two or three things:

Firſt, I beſeech you, conſider how ſolemnly our Saviour and his apoſtles call upon you to the practice of this. As for our Saviour, I might quote many paſſages in his diſcourſes to this purpoſe; but I will only take notice of two, becauſe I ſaid I would be ſhort. And I mention one of them the rather, becauſe the beginning of it ſeems to favour the pretences of thoſe men we have been now talking of.

The text is in the xith of St. Matthew, ver. 28, 29. There our Saviour makes a general and ſolemn invitation to all ſinners to come to him. *Come unto me*, ſaith he, *all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.* What words can be ſweeter than theſe? Whoever is oppreſſed with the guilt of his ſins, it is but coming to Chriſt, that is, as they uſually expound

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it, believing in him, and casting themselves wholly upon him, and they shall have their burdens taken off, and be at perfect ease and rest. But what follows? *Take*, saith our Saviour, *my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and then ye shall find rest for your souls.* Here our Saviour shews that he means something more by coming to him: Coming to Christ in his sense, is to take his yoke upon ourselves (and a most easy and comfortable yoke it is) and to learn of him, to imitate his example, to frame our minds, and spirits, and tempers to a conformity with his mind, and spirit, and temper; to be meek and lowly in heart, as he was; and so in all other instances. This is that which every one must do, if he means to find rest for his soul.

Again, When our Saviour gave that unheard-of instance of kindness and condescension to his disciples in vouchsafing to wash their feet, pray mind the application he makes of it, John xiii. 15. *I have given you*, (saith he) *an example, that ye should do to one another as I have done unto you. If I*, says he, *your Lord and master, have washed your feet, then ought ye to wash one another's feet.*

You see by this, that his example was intended by him to have all the force and obligation of a command; only in this it had the advantage, that it was more moving and persuasive.

As for the apostles, it would be endless to repeat all the passages wherein they propose our Saviour to us as a pattern and example of living: How they bid us to *look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*, lest at any time we should be weary and faint in our minds! How they call upon us to walk in his steps, to be followers of him, nay, to be followers of them, because

becauſe they were followers of him! How often do they mention his patience, his humility, his meekneſs, his boundleſs love and charity, as arguments and encouragements to us to proceed in thoſe virtues? Laſtly, they lay ſuch ſtreſs upon this point of conforming ourſelves to the example of Chriſt in all things, that they make the very notion of diſcipleſhip to him, to conſiſt in it. *Whoever* (ſays St. John, ep. 1. ch. ii.) *ſaith that he abideth in him*, (that is, pretends to be a diſciple of his) *ought himſelf alſo to walk even as he walketh*; without this he cannot be accounted a diſciple of Chriſt.

And indeed it muſt needs be true in the reaſon of the thing. Which is the ſecond thing I would deſire you to conſider. For what is it to be any one's diſciple, but to be a follower of him in the myſtery that he profeſſeth. If a man ſets up for a maſter in any ſcience or ſpeculative matters, in that caſe to be a diſciple of his, is to embrace his notions and ſentiments of the thing he pretends to teach. If he be a teacher of ſome art, or matters of practice, why then his diſciples are thoſe that conform themſelves to his methods and ways of practice in that art. This is the notion that all the world has of a diſciple.

If now we would know what it is to be a diſciple of Chriſt, the way muſt be to know what it is that Chriſt profeſſeth; what myſtery it was that he pretended to teach to the world. If his buſineſs among mankind, was only to teach men ſome new notions they knew not before, then I grant there is no more required to the being his diſciple, than only to believe and underſtand thoſe notions he delivered: Or if his buſineſs was further, to gather together a number of men that ſhould openly profeſs ſuch a ſet of propoſitions; and to oblige

them thereto, they ſhould all of them, upon the entrance of that profeſſion, be baptized with water, as a ſolemn ceremony of initiation into it; then indeed to make one a diſciple of his, it would be ſufficient that he was a profeſſor and a baptized perſon, let him live what way he pleaſed. But now, ſince, as all muſt acknowledge, the chief ſkill that our Saviour profeſſed, was that of living; the main art and myſtery he pretended to teach, was the art of ordering our converſation ſo, as that we might pleaſe God, and be accepted of him; there muſt go more to the making a diſciple of his, than either belief, or profeſſion, or baptiſm. A man, if he will deſerve that name, muſt live as he lived, muſt conform himſelf to his manners, and precepts of living, and way of walking, otherwiſe he doth not follow him in the art he profeſſeth, and conſequently is no more his diſciple than a man becauſe he wears a turbant is the diſciple of Mahomet, tho' in all things elſe he be a Jew; or than a man of old was a ſtoic, becauſe he, like them, walked in the portico, though in the mean time he held the principles of Epicurus.

This is ſo plain a thing, that tho' we may ſometimes with a great deal of pains, cheat ourſelves, yet it is impoſſible to impoſe upon any indifferent perſon in the matter. Let us ſuppoſe a heathen to have read the hiſtory of our Saviour, and from hence to be informed what his pretences and deſigns were in the world; what good precepts he gave for the conduct of mens converſation; what a kind of life he led; how innocent, ſober, chaſte, meek-ſpirited, patient, humble, devout, charitable a perſon he was: Will he not from this conclude, that ſurely all that pretend to be the diſciples of this Jeſus, are obliged, not only in conſcience, but in decency, and for their own credit, and the credit of

of their master, to live as he lived; or if they do not, they shew they do not belong to him? Shall any of us be able, with all the art we have, let us pretend never so much devotion to our Lord, let us make never so many reverences at his name, tho' we extol him to the skies, tho' we profess we glory in nothing so much as in being his disciples, tho' we are zealous for his religion above all things, nay, tho' we swear we would die for him, if there was occasion; yet, I say, can any of us, with all these artifices, make the man believe that we are truly his disciples, if we lead our lives in a contrary way to what he did? May he not truly and justly reply to us, I hear your words indeed, you are very civil and complimental to this person whom you call your Saviour; but you must pardon me, if I cannot believe you have any real respect or inward veneration for him? I cannot think that you either truly believe in him, or expect to be saved by him; for if you did, you could not possibly live so contrary both to his precepts and his practices as I see you do. He, as your own story tells, was a meek, modest, quiet-spirited man: But you are all fire, when you are in the least provok'd. His character was, that he did not only forgive great injuries, but did good to those that did them, and pray'd for his bitterest enemies: But you, on the contrary, on the least affront, meditate a revenge, and think your honour never safe till you have effected it. He despised the world, and was very well contented with his innocent poverty: But you are for getting no more than all you can; and that too by all base and unjustifiable ways; and when you have done all, you are not contented with what you have, but still would have more. He was much a stranger to all bodily pleasures, and very moderate in the use of the good things

things of this life: But you cannot live without luxury, and uncleanneſs, and drunkenneſs. How can theſe manners comport with the being a diſciple of Jeſus?

I muſt confeſs, I cannot ſee how the ſubtileſt man can anſwer theſe reproaches of a pagan. Either therefore let us live like Jeſus Chriſt, or throw away the name of his diſciples. To keep that, and yet not do the other, is a piece of as great hypocriſy and impudence as any man can be guilty of.

But, thirdly and laſtly, to conclude all. If neither of theſe two foregoing conſiderations will perſuade us to ſet ourſelves to the imitation of Chriſt's example, let it be conſidered further, that there is an abſolute neceſſity that we ſhould do it, even to ſuch a degree, that we are no way capable ſubjects of the mercies of Chriſt, or of any of the benefits he hath purchaſed for mankind, if we do not.

The proof of this is that known maxim of the apoſtle in 2 Cor. vi. 15. *What fellowſhip hath light with darkneſs? or what agreement hath Chriſt with Belial?* All chriſtians do agree, that whatever they are to hope for in another world, was purchaſed for them by Chriſt, and that he is the beſtower of it; and that the ſum of it conſiſts in this, that they ſhall be where Chriſt is, and ſhall for ever enjoy him. Now I aſk, can any man reaſonably expect that Chriſt ſhould have any kindneſs for him, or confer any of the benefits he hath purchaſed upon him, if he be of a different ſpirit and temper from what he was? Can he think that Chriſt intended any drop of his blood, that was ſhed for man's ſalvation, for thoſe ungrateful wretches, that had ſo little regard to him, that they would not ſo much as endeavour to frame their minds and ſouls to his will,

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and copy out his example in their lives? No man can, with reaſon, think he did: for if the Spirit and temper of Chriſt was really amiable, was to be eſteemed and beloved, then the contrary ſpirit and temper is to be deſpiſed and hated. And therefore, if we will ſuppoſe our Saviour to make true eſtimates of things, he muſt not, he cannot have any kindneſs for thoſe that, notwithſtanding all the obligations he hath laid upon them, do ſtill retain and hug thoſe evil qualities which of all things in the world, are moſt contradictory to his holy nature.

But ſuppoſing we could imagine that our Saviour was as unaccountably kind, as ſome preſumptuous men would have him; ſuppoſing he would ſave thoſe very perſons that were moſt oppoſite and contrary to him in their natures, and continued to their dying day ſo to be; yet it ought to be conſidered, whether there be not a repugnancy in the nature of the thing, that ſuch men ſhould be ſaved or made happy by Chriſt. My meaning is, how good ſoever Chriſt's intentions may be ſuppoſed towards them, yet their own qualities, which they carry out of the world with them, will put an eternal bar to their ſalvation. For, as I ſaid before, from St. Paul, *what concord hath Chriſt with Belial?* If the ſupreme happineſs of a chriſtian be to be with Chriſt, and to enjoy him, what a ſmall portion of happineſs are ſuch men like to have in the other world? Nay rather, what uneaſineſs and torment ſhall they not have, if they be put into that ſtate? Can it be any pleaſure to them, to be continually in the company of one whom they cannot heartily love, and whoſe nature and temper is as contrary to theirs, as fire is to water? Are they like to have any enjoyment of ſuch a perſon, nay, will it not rather be un-

ſupportable to them to be near him? Can baſeneſs, and luſt, and ſottiſhneſs, and villainy, and filthineſs, receive any delight or gratification from the ſociety and communication of perfect purity, and holineſs, and charity?

Ay; but it may be ſaid, that at the moment of their deaths, Chriſt may, in kindneſs to them, quite change their nature, and make them like unto himſelf, and then all is well.

I anſwer, if it be ſo, yet ſtill what I aſſert is true, namely, that every one muſt be, ſooner or later, conformed to the life of Chriſt; muſt be poſſeſſed of his nature and temper, before he is capable of the happineſs that he hath purchaſed for us.

But then, ſince the effecting ſo ſudden, ſo miraculous a change in us as is here pretended, is by no means to be expected, ſince Chriſt has made no promiſes, given no encouragement to hope, that any that live unlike him, ſhall, dying, be made like him. It will infinitely concern us all, while we are alive and in health, to conform ourſelves to the example of our bleſſed Lord, and to poſſeſs ourſelves of that ſpirit, and thoſe qualities, that he was ſo remarkable for in the world: Which is all that I meant to preſs upon you; and God almighty grant we may all do ſo, &c.

SER-

SERMON II.

Our obligations to live as CHRIST lived: A casuistical discourse on the same text.

1 PET. ii. 21.

Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.

MY argument here is the imitation of Christ, or the following Christ's example. And in treating of it, I proposed to do these three things:

First of all in general, to shew the great obligation that lies upon all christians to follow Christ's example.

Secondly, to explain the extent of this obligation; how far, and in what instances Christ's life is an example to us, and doth oblige us to imitation.

Thirdly, to propose some of those virtues that our Saviour was most eminent for, and which are of the greatest use in human life, and seriously to recommend them to your imitation.

The first of these points I have already dispatched, and shall not now trouble you with a repetition of any thing about it.

I proceed therefore to the second, which is to give an account how far, and in what instances Christ's life is an example to us, and doth oblige us to imitation.

And here the case that comes to be discussed, is this: Are we christians so to propose the life of Christ as the pattern and model of ours, as to take ourselves to be obliged to do every thing that our Saviour did, and in the same manner that he did it? Or, if we be not bound precisely to do this, what rules and measures are we to take in this matter?

It is a very weighty case, and deserves to be very carefully considered, because indeed, upon the well adjusting of it does depend the resolution of a great many particular cases of conscience, which daily happen in human life, and which, if men have not right notions of this general point, do frequently bring both inconveniencies upon themselves, and harm to the public.

Now what I have to offer for the resolution of this case, I shall, for my more distinct proceeding, comprize in six particulars. And the first of them is this:

I. Our Saviour cannot be supposed to have given us an example in all the passages of his life; because in some of them it is not possible for us to imitate him. Several of our Saviour's actions were wholly extraordinary, and the immediate effects of a supernatural divine power. Such were all the miracles and wonderful works he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine, and giving testimony to the world that he was a prophet sent from God; as his curing all diseases, casting out devils, opening the eyes of the blind,

making the lame to walk, and the dumb to ſpeak, feeding many thouſands with a very ſmall quantity of meat, raiſing the dead to life, faſting forty days and forty nights, with many more inſtances of the like nature. Now in theſe things, I ſay, we cannot pretend that Jeſus Chriſt was an example to us, becauſe they are above the powers of human nature to perform.

Some of the Quakers indeed heretofore have been ſo extravagantly vain, as to think they could do theſe things by the power of the divine Spirit that was in them. And accordingly, as I have read, ſome of them have attempted to raiſe a dead man out of his grave; and others, to faſt forty days, as our Saviour did. But their ſhameful diſappointment in the firſt enterprize, and their loſing their lives in the ſecond, hath been a demonſtration that it was not the Spirit of God (as they pretended) that they were acted by, but the ſpirit of error and deluſion.

II. But ſecondly, neither was our Saviour an example to us in all thoſe actions of his life in which we are capable of imitating him. He did ſeveral things which it is not warrantable for us to do; and he did likewiſe ſeveral things which, tho' we can be ſuppoſed to do them lawfully, yet we are not obliged to do them: Nay, oftentimes it would be highly inconvenient if we ſhould. This is my ſecond propoſition; and the reaſon of it is this: Our Saviour was not in the ſame circumſtances that we are in this world. He had a particular office committed to him by his Father, for the diſcharge of which many things were neceſſary, and many other things highly convenient to be done by him, which would by no means be allowable in us: and ſuch of them as would be allowable, yet would be very indiſcreet.

As for inſtance; our Saviour, as being a prophet ſent from God, was veſted with an authority to reform religion, and the abuſe of God's worſhip among the Jews; and by virtue of that commiſſion and authority, we ſee he drove the buyers and ſellers out of the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the ſeats of them that ſold doves. Theſe being great profanations of the temple, which was deſigned, as our Saviour tells them, to be a houſe of prayer, and not a place of merchandize. But now for any of us to do ſuch an action, who are private perſons, and have no commiſſion from God, nor warrant from public authority, tho' the cauſe of religion was never ſo much concerned, would be a thing highly reproveable. I mention this the rather, becauſe this fact of our Saviour's hath ſometimes been pleaded for the countenancing of all outrageous, tumultuous, ſeditious actions, that bold and miſtaken zeal could prompt a man to. Men have thought, that by this precedent they were warranted to affront the miniſters of religion, even when they were doing their office, to diſturb the public ſervice, to tear the liturgy, to deface church windows and monuments, to defile the font and the holy table, and to do any extravagant action, that tended, as they thought, to the reformation of religion, and the pulling down (as their phraſe was) of Dagon and ſuperſtition.——But ſuppoſing theſe things they were ſo hot againſt to be as corrupt and ſuperſtitious as they would have them; ſuppoſing them to be great abuſes in the worſhip of God; to be very rotten rags of popery; to be every whit as idolatrous, as they were really innocent, and decent, and convenient; yet this would not in the leaſt juſtify ſuch actions; tho' their deſign was good, and the work they went about

about was good, the whole action was very bad. Whoever makes a riot, or disturbs the public peace, or worship, or affronts authority upon account or pretence of redressing abuses in, or reforming of religion, unless he can give evidence that he hath an immediate commission from God (having none from man) and shew too the seal of that commission, namely, all manner of signs and wonders, and miracles, however zealous he may be for religion, yet he hath not a zeal according to knowledge; and God will be so far from rewarding him for it, that he stands justly accountable both to God and man for his extravagancy.

But to leave this, and to give another instance or two in the matter we are upon. Our Saviour, we know, after he was baptized, and entered upon his public ministry, left his former employment and habitation: for before that he lived at Nazareth, and, as is probable, exercised the art of a carpenter; for he is, in the 6th of St. Mark, ver. 3. called the carpenter by the Jews. I say, he left his employment and habitation, and from henceforward gave himself in a manner wholly to an ambulatory life, going from place to place to do good to all persons, and to preach the gospel to all he met with.—But now for any of us to imitate him in this, to leave our callings, and our employments, and our relations, and our way of living, and to travel about from town to town, tho' we propoied to ourselves ends of never so great charity to mankind in so doing, yet it would be so far in us from being a praise-worthy action, that if all of us thought ourselves obliged to it, it would destroy all trade and commerce, and settled way of living in the world. This kind of life was indeed necessary to our

Saviour, and to his apoſtles too, becauſe the diſcharge of the office committed to them did require it. Our Saviour's errand was to preach the goſpel of his kingdom in all places among the Jews (and this office he entered upon at his baptiſm.) And the apoſtles they were to preach the goſpel, and to gather churches throughout all nations. But now where the goſpel is already preached, and churches planted, and the government of them ſettled, for any one to imitate this practice, would probably be ſo far from doing good, that it would do hurt; at leaſt thoſe that undertake it are no ways obliged to it.

Thus again; our Saviour choſe a life of great meanneſs and poverty: he had not a houſe to lay his head in, but lived wholly on the charity of others: Nay, he obliged his apoſtles likewiſe to quit all their fortunes and follow him. This now in him and them was very reaſonable, becauſe it did very much tend to promote thoſe ends for which our Saviour came hither; did much conduce to the ſpreading of the goſpel, and gaining it entertainment in the world. But now, when all things are ſettled, and the goſpel is become the law of a nation, and the profeſſion of it is not only freed from danger and perſecution, but is creditable and advantageous; for any man, upon account of conformity to our Saviour's life, to vow a voluntary poverty, or to give all that he hath to the poor, and to go about ſeeking a livelihood from the charity of others, as he hath no warrant for it, ſo will it never procure him a greater reward in the other world: unleſs we ſuppoſe God will reward a man for deſerting his ſtation which providence has put him in, and rendering himſelf leſs uſeful to the world, and indeed

indeed (which is the tendency of it) doing his part toward the diſſolving civil ſociety.

You ſee in the circumſtances our Saviour was placed in, the perſon and character he bore, and the office he was to execute, ought thoroughly to be conſidered, before we paſs a judgment what actions of his are to be imitated by us. If we be in a different ſtate and condition, in a different quality from what he was in, it will often fall out, that the ſame action will not become us, that was extremely proper and decent in him.

To give one inſtance more of this that is very conſiderable:

I have already ſaid, that our Saviour acted in one reſpect as a public perſon; that is, he was ſent by God with authority to reform religion in the world. But now this office of his did only extend to affairs of religion. He did not pretend any juriſdiction or authority as to civil cauſes and concernments, as he that now calls himſelf his vicar doth. Thoſe he left in the ſame hands in which he found them; in that reſpect he was only a private perſon, and was as obedient to the civil government, and the laws, as any in the country where he lived. And hereupon it was, that when a man came to him to deſire him to divide an inheritance between him and his brother, that it ſeems they could not agree about, he ſolemnly refuſes to have any thing to do in the matter, ſaying to him, *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* Luke xii. 14. And again, when the woman that was taken in adultery was brought before him, (John viii. 4.) and he was aſked his opinion, whether, there being ſufficient evidence of the fact, ſhe ought not to be ſtoned, as the law of Moſes had commanded, he,

inſtead of paſſing ſentence upon her, endeavours to ſhame the accuſers, bidding thoſe of them that were without ſin, to caſt the firſt ſtone at her. And when, upon this unexpected anſwer, they all ſneaked away, and the woman was left alone, all the cenſure that he paſſed upon her was this, That ſince ſhe was not already condemned, neither would he condemn her; only let her be careful that ſhe ſinned no more. Now, I ſay, this kind of deportment and theſe anſwers were very prudent and proper in our Saviour, who was no ways concerned in the adminiſtration of juſtice, or the deciding controverſies between man and man about their civil rights and titles. But if any of his followers, who is a judge or a magiſtrate, and intruſted with the execution of laws, ſhould take this carriage of our Saviour's for a precedent for him to walk by, and ſhould give ſuch anſwers, when juſtice, according to law, is demanded of him, he would very ill employ his power, and could no way anſwer it to God or man.

Well; but ſince by this diſcourſe it appears that there are ſome actions of our Saviour's that cannot be followed, and ſome that muſt not, or at leaſt cannot, with prudence and convenience, be followed, the queſtion is, what meaſures we are to take in this matter? How ſhall we know when to imitate our Saviour and when not?

III. By way of anſwer to this in general, I lay down my third propoſition; and that is this: The great rule that is to direct us in this affair, is our Saviour's precepts and commands. In what matter ſoever our Saviour has laid his commands upon us, in that we are bound to follow his ſteps: But where we have no law, no command, as to the particular matter,

ter, there we may, or may not, imitate him, according as the reaſon of the thing directs, or the parity or diſparity of our circumſtances with thoſe of our Saviour doth fall out. The truth is, the proper end and deſign of examples, is rather to invite and encourage to their imitation, than to oblige. No man can be directly obliged in conſcience to follow another man in his actions, merely becauſe he ſees him do them; for then he would be obliged indiſcriminately to do whatever that perſon did, which, as I have ſhewed before, would be intolerable. But we therefore take ourſelves obliged to follow any perſon's example, either becauſe that perſon hath authority over us, and hath commanded us to follow him in ſuch and ſuch things; or whether he have commanded us or no, we are ſenſible that thoſe inſtances, wherein we take ourſelves obliged to follow him, are really matters of duty to us, and bound upon us by ſome law of God. So that, in proper ſpeaking, it is the law of God, or of our Saviour, commanding us to do or to forbear ſuch and ſuch particular things, which creates our obligation to follow his example in thoſe things, and not his example itſelf: Thus for inſtance; if it had not been our duty, by Chriſt's command, to pray conſtantly, to forgive injuries, to deny ourſelves, and to take up the croſs, and the like, his example in theſe matters would not have been of obligation to us. But now, ſince by his laws all theſe are matters of duty to us, hence it comes to paſs that we are indiſpenſibly obliged to follow his example in every one of theſe inſtances, even to that degree, that we cannot call ourſelves Chriſt's diſciples if we do not.

The main thing therefore that is to be done by us, in order to our taking right meaſures about the imitation

tion of Chriſt's example, is to inform ourſelves carefully about all the points and branches of our duty, as they are laid down by our Saviour in his holy goſpel. When once we are rightly inſtructed in theſe, we ſhall ſeldom be at a loſs to know what thoſe things are in the life of our bleſſed Saviour, that we are to charge ourſelves with the imitation of; and what thoſe things are, that do not ſo immediately concern us to put in practice.

IV. But, fourthly, tho', as I ſaid, it is our Saviour's laws that give force and obligatorineſs to his example, yet this doth not hinder but that we may likewiſe receive great benefit and advantage, and ſometimes directions alſo, from actions of his, that, in ſtrictneſs, we either cannot, or are not bound to imitate. For all theſe actions of his, both thoſe that were wholly miraculous, and thoſe that related to, and were purſuant of that public office that was committed to him, and thoſe alſo that ſeemed the moſt indifferent and arbitrary, and in which he hath given us no command: I ſay, all theſe do mightily help us to make a judgment what manner of perſon our Saviour was; what his ſpirit, and temper, and qualities were. Now certainly in theſe we are bound always, and without exception, to imitate him, becauſe he himſelf hath over and over again commanded us ſo to do; tho' we are not bound to do thoſe particular actions by which that ſpirit and temper, and thoſe qualities were expreſſed. So that take any action of our Saviour's, that is recorded in the whole goſpel, whether it be ſuch a one as we are bound to imitate him in, or ſuch a one as we are not bound, yet it will be, ſome way or other, of great uſe to us in the conduct of our lives.

I

I ſhall explain my meaning in two or three inſtances.

When we conſider the nature and kind of thoſe many wonderful works that our Saviour wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine, and find they were not merely ſigns and prodigies, and ſuch ſupernatural operations, as did only tend to amaze and aſtoniſh people (as thoſe were that are ſaid to have been wrought by Apollonius Tyaneus) and likewiſe that they did not conſiſt in judgments, and in executing the vengeance of God upon ſinners and wicked men (as did thoſe miracles which Moſes really wrought, when he brought the children of Iſrael out of the Egyptian ſlavery) but they were all of them miracles of mercy, actions of kindneſs, and charity, and beneficence to mankind; that though they were primarily intended to ſhew that he was a prophet ſent from God, yet they were done in ſuch a way, that ſtill ſomebody or other had benefit by them: either ſome blind man was reſtored to his ſight, or ſome ſick man cured, or ſome lunatic brought to his right wits, or ſome hungry man fed, or the like. I ſay, tho' we cannot propoſe to ourſelves to imitate our Saviour in theſe miraculous works of his, yet we may, from the nature of theſe works, be notably inſtructed what kind of ſpirit our Saviour was of, and what kind of diſpenſation that was that he came to ſet on foot in the world. It appears plainly from hence, that our Saviour was a preacher of mercy, and a lover of mercy; that he came to ſave men, and not to deſtroy them; that his kingdom was to be a kingdom of love and peace; and that he himſelf was ſo far from being wrathful and vindictive in his temper (tho' never man was more provoked than he was) that on the contrary he

he was beyond all expreſſion kind, and benign, and compaſſionate, and long-ſuffering, and took the greateſt delight in the world to do good to all that came in his way.

Now this very obſervation cannot but be of great uſe to us; for it will teach us to ſet a higher value upon thoſe qualities of beneficence and charity, and will let us ſee that we are not of the chriſtian ſpirit, if we do not ſtudy to do good to all, according to the ability that we have; and that, tho' we cannot work miracles for the relief of neceſſitous and miſerable perſons, as our Saviour did, yet we ſhould be as kind and as ſerviceable to them as we can.

Thus again; When we conſider that action of our Saviour's, of driving the buyers and ſellers out of the temple, we cannot but from hence obſerve, what a great zeal our Saviour had for the honour and the reverend uſage of places dedicated to God's ſervice; and how concerned he was, that they ſhould not be profaned, and put to a common uſe. Now tho' this action of his (as I ſaid) will not warrant us to do the ſame, becauſe we have not the ſame authority that he had, yet it will teach us, that we ought every one of us to behave ourſelves reverently in the houſe of God, and in our ſphere, and as far as we lawfully may, to do our endeavours to vindicate both places and things that appertain to God as much as we can from profanation and contempt.

Thus again, When our Saviour waſhed the feet of his diſciples; this action of his doth not paſs any obligation upon us to do the ſame, in a literal ſenſe, either to our ſervants or friends: yet it plainly ſhews what a mighty ſtreſs he laid upon all actions of humility, and condeſcenſion, and obligingneſs, in that for

for the recommending such actions to us he would stoop to so mean an office as the washing his disciples feet. Now this will still add a greater weight to the command that he hath given us in this matter. For thus we are to reason (as he himself applies this action, and it is such a reasoning as hath the force of a demonstration). If Jesus Christ, our great Lord and master, descended so low as to wash the feet of his servants, then sure the best of us ought not to think ourselves too good to serve our brethren even in the meanest instances.

Lastly, Suppose any of us, in a case where our rights and privileges are concerned, should be doubtful how we are to behave ourselves, whether we should insist upon them, or whether we should depart from them; and the case is such, that we have no express command of God to determine us either way: Why now in this case we have an example of our Saviour, that will be of great use to us, because it shews what kind of principles he himself then acted by, tho' he gave no command in the matter. For when the tribute-money towards the repairs and service of the temple was demanded of him by the Jewish officers, tho' he made it appear to them that he was not obliged to pay it, as being, by a peculiar privilege and personal right, free from that imposition, yet rather than offend them (as he expresses it) rather than do a thing that men might make an ill construction of, and that might encourage others to refuse the payment of their dues, he orders St. Peter to lay down the money they demanded, tho' yet a miracle must be wrought before that money could be come by. See this history in the 17th of St. Matthew, ver. 24.

Here

Here now is an everlasting rule given to all christians, how they are to behave themselves in such cases as these, namely, that it is better to depart from our rights, than from our charity; and that privileges are not to be insisted on against a public good, or when the insisting on them proves matter of scandal, or gives ill example to others.

The sum of what I have said upon this head, comes to this: Though the general rules and measures of our following Christ's example be his laws and precepts, yet all his actions, if we do not so much attend to the particular action, as to the mind and spirit with which it was done, will be of wonderful use to us, both for the reforming our judgments, and directing our practice, and for the encouragement of us in all godly and holy living. We ought in all instances to be of the same spirit and temper that our Saviour was; and if we are sure that we are in the same circumstances that he was, then to do as he did. And in any case that happens to us, where we have no direct law of our Saviour's to guide ourselves by, we may then have recourse to his example (I mean the example of his genius and temper) putting the question to ourselves, How would my Lord have done in this case, had he been in the same circumstances that I am now in? And if we resolve sincerely to act, as we believe he would have done in the case, according to those notices we have from the history of his life, of his humour, and qualities, and temper, there are few cases wherein we shall fail of good direction.

V. My fifth proposition about this point is this: In a matter where Christ hath laid his commands upon us, yet we are not bound to come up to the precise measures of our Saviour's life: We are not obliged

lig'd to that degree of exactneſs and perfection in our actions that he attained to: It is enough for us, that in theſe matters we follow him as far as we can; that we endeavour to imitate him according to our meaſures, tho' we never reach that excellency, that heroical virtue that he gave proof of in all his actions.

The reaſon of this is plain. As our Saviour was an extraordinary perſon, ſo the inſtances he gave of his virtue were ſometimes extraordinary alſo. And the duties he recommended to others, he himſelf performed, not only in full perfection, without any mixture of ſin and infirmity, but alſo ſometimes in ſuch inſtances, and with ſuch circumſtances, as the weakneſs of our preſent ſtate, and our courſe of life in the world, will not allow us to imitate.

To give an inſtance of this: He was much in his devotions to God: So ought we, becauſe it is a plain command: But he was ſo intenſe and fervent in thoſe devotions, that we may reaſonably believe no wandring thoughts, no diſtractions of mind did ever diſcompoſe or interrupt him. Why in this too we ſhould imitate him as far as we can. But yet to attain to the ſame degree of fixedneſs and fervency of ſpirit, we muſt never expect, and therefore certainly we are not bound to it.

But further; ſo great was the ardor and flame of his devotion, that he ſpent whole nights in retirement and prayer to God, as the goſpel informs us. But now for us to think ourſelves obliged to do ſo, would be very unreaſonable, and might draw great inconveniencies upon us. It is ſufficient for us that we be as earneſt, and as diligent, and as frequent in our devotions, both public and private, as our ſtrength and our neceſſary occaſions will allow: But to tie up ourſelves

ſelves rigidly to ſo many hours, or to whole nights of prayer, in imitation of our Saviour, is more than ſometimes our conſtitution will bear; or if it would, there is no obligation upon us to do it.

VI. Laſtly, To all this, let me add one propoſition more, and then I have offered all that I have to ſay upon this argument. And it is this:

That in thoſe very particular actions of our Saviour, that he hath obliged us to imitate him in, yet, as to the circumſtances of them, he hath left us at liberty, and we are to govern ourſelves by reaſon and prudence; or by the cuſtom of the country where we live; or by the laws of our ſuperiors.

Thus, for inſtance; our Saviour at his laſt ſupper took bread, and bleſſed, and brake it, and gave it to his diſciples, ſaying, *Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me.* And ſo likewiſe the cup after ſupper. This action now the miniſters of the goſpel are to imitate our Saviour in as long as the world laſts, becauſe he hath ſolemnly commanded that they ſhould do ſo. But they are not bound to imitate him in all the particular circumſtances of this action of his: they are not bound, when they celebrate this holy ſupper, to do it juſt in the ſame manner, and at ſuch a time of the day, and in ſuch a ſort of place, as our Lord himſelf did, becauſe this is no where commanded either by Chriſt or his apoſtles; nor indeed are theſe things at all of the eſſence of the action, but particularly ſeparable from it, and adventitious to it. I the rather chuſe to mention this inſtance, becauſe it hath afforded matter for many ſcruples and much diſpute in our days. How comes it to paſs (ſay ſome) that you of the church of England oblige all thoſe that receive the ſacrament among

among you, to receive it in the poſture of kneeling? Is not this contrary to the practice of our Saviour? Did not his apoſtles receive it at his hands in a different poſture, namely in a table poſture, and not in a praying poſture? And is not every religious action of our Saviour's to be imitated as far as we are capable of imitating it? This is the great argument that is brought againſt our uſage of kneeling at the ſacrament; and is of ſuch force with ſome, that, upon account thereof, they dare not join in our communion.

I will not here enter upon a vindication of the unexceptionableneſs, lawfulneſs, decency, and antiquity of this poſture in receiving the ſacrament, and the fitneſs of it above all others, but ſhall juſt conſider the matter ſo far as my preſent propoſition leads me to ſpeak of it. And that which I would ſay, is this: Thoſe people that make the objection againſt kneeling that I have now mentioned, do not ſeem to conſider the difference of an action, and the circumſtances of an action. Geſture or poſture is not an action, but the circumſtance of an action. Let us therefore be never ſo much bound to imitate our Saviour's or the apoſtles actions, yet it doth not from hence follow, that we are bound to imitate their geſtures or poſtures in thoſe actions. And if any will affirm that we are, they ought at leaſt to give us ſome ſort of proof for it, either from ſcripture, or the ſenſe of the primitive church. The ſcriptures, I am ſure, can produce none; and the primitive church, if we may judge of their ſenſe by their practice, is quite againſt them.

But I wiſh thoſe that inſiſt upon this, would give me an anſwer to this queſtion: Why ſhould we be more obliged to imitate the poſture of our Saviour and his

his apoſtles, in receiving the holy ſacrament, than to imitate the time, the place, the habit in which they did it? Ought there not to be as much regard had to theſe circumſtances in any action as to the former? Are they not all of equal moment and conſideration? If I muſt be bound to partake of the holy ſupper only in that poſture in which it was inſtituted, and taken at firſt by our Lord and his apoſtles, then I muſt likewiſe, by parity of reaſon, be bound to receive it in ſuch a place as they did, that is to ſay, not in a church, but in a chamber. I muſt be bound to receive it at the time that they did, that is to ſay, not in the morning and faſting, but after ſupper. The miniſter that gives it me ought to have on ſuch a habit as our Saviour had, that is to ſay, a long woven robe without ſeam, and not a gown or ſurplice. But now ſince none do think themſelves obliged to obſerve theſe things, why ſhould they think themſelves ſo tied up as to the other? unleſs they can ſhew that there is ſomething peculiar and particularly obligatory in this circumſtance of geſture, which there is not in the other three. But this no man has ever yet ſhew'd, nor, I believe, ever will.

But I would farther aſk theſe our brethren, Do they themſelves obſerve that law which they would impoſe upon others? Do they uſe that geſture in taking the holy ſupper that our Saviour and his apoſtles did? If what they ſay be true, namely, that the apoſtles received the ſacrament at our Saviour's hands in a table poſture, then I am ſure they do not. For the poſture which our Saviour and his apoſtles uſed in taking their meals, was not ſitting, as we practiſe, but lying or leaning on a couch: as may be proved from ſeveral texts of ſcripture; and particularly from the account

account that is given by St. John, of this very laſt ſupper of our Saviour's. But now I never heard that any of our brethren uſed to receive the ſacrament in this poſture, but they do it either ſitting or ſtanding, which is a quite different geſture. But in anſwer to this they ſay, that we are not obliged to obſerve preciſely that particular poſture that our Saviour uſed, but only in general, that poſture which is uſed at meals, becauſe he did ſo. Now the cuſtom of our country is, to take our meals ſitting, and therefore, in uſing that poſture at the ſacrament, we do ſufficiently follow our Saviour's example.

To this I reply firſt, That this is *gratis dictum*; thoſe that ſay this, can give no reaſon why they ſay ſo. If the principle they build their notion upon will hold water, it will every jot as much prove the neceſſity of imitating Chriſt in the particular poſture he uſed, as of imitating him in the general, that is to ſay, obſerving the common table poſture uſed in our country.

But further; If the general received poſture at meals be the only allowable poſture of receiving the ſacrament (as muſt be concluded from this doctrine, if any thing can be concluded from it) then what will become of them that receive the ſacrament ſtanding (as many do) that is no more the common poſture at meals than kneeling is. It is ſitting that hath univerſally prevailed in our country; and therefore to receive the ſacrament ſtanding, or in any other poſture but ſitting, muſt, according to this doctrine, be irregular; which yet, I hope, none of them will affirm. But laſtly, to conclude; Pray let this be conſider'd: Why ſhould the cuſtom of any country be ſufficient to make ſtanding or ſitting to come in the place of ly-

ing

ing or leaning at the ſacrament, and yet the public law of a nation ſhall not be able to do as much for kneeling? Shall not a law made by public authority, and confirmed by long uſage of the church, have the ſame force to eſtabliſh kneeling in the place of ſitting, (there being no more unlawfulneſs in the one poſture than in the other) as a cuſtom brought in by little and little, and without any public authority, had to bring in ſitting in the place of leaning?

But I am ſenſible I tire you with being ſo long upon this head. All the apology I have to make, is, that I thought it would ſerve ſome purpoſe to make this matter as plain as was poſſible.

I have now done with my caſes of conſcience concerning the extent of our obligation to follow Chriſt's example, which, you ſee, I have reſolved in ſix propoſitions.

The next thing I am to do, is to propoſe ſome of thoſe virtues which our Saviour was moſt eminent for, and which are of the greateſt uſe in human life, and ſeriouſly to recommend them to your imitation.

I pray God give a bleſſing to what has been ſaid.

Now to God, &c.

SERMON III.

Chriſt's piety, and diligence, and charity.

1 PET. ii. 21.

Leaving us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps.

I HAVE made two ſermons upon this text. In the firſt of them, I laid before you in general the great obligation that lies upon us to follow our Lord's example. In the ſecond, I endeavoured to ſhew the extent of this obligation; how far, and in what inſtances Chriſt's life was an example to us; in what caſes we are obliged to the imitation of it, and in what caſes not. I now come to the third thing I propoſed upon this text, and which indeed is the principal thing I intended, when I firſt pitched upon it; and that is, to give a more particular account of our Saviour's life, as it was deſigned for an example to us; and to draw ſome ſort of picture of him, as to thoſe virtues and qualities which he was moſt eminent and remarkable for, and in which he chiefly propoſed himſelf to our imitation, and moſt earneſtly to recommend them to your practice.

And

And indeed very great benefits and advantages ſhall we reap to ourſelves by ſeriouſly employing our thoughts and meditations upon this ſubject. Oh! what a mighty check would the frequent conſideration of our Saviour's holy and immaculate life give to the temptations of vice and luſt, with which we are daily aſſaulted; and how powerful a ſpur and incitement would it be to us, vigorouſly to purſue all manner of virtue and holineſs! We ſhould think no attainments too big for our courage and endeavour, ſo long as we had but the Holy Jeſus before our eyes. To conſider what victories he obtain'd againſt ſin and the world, and the kingdom of darkneſs, would inſpire us with reſolutions worthy of thoſe that pretend to be the followers of ſo great a maſter: Nay, we ſhould not only receive encouragement, but alſo very conſiderable aſſiſtances and directions for the conduct of ourſelves in this chriſtian warfare, from a due conſideration of this example of Chriſt. If we were thoroughly inſtructed in the ſpirit and temper of our Saviour, it would be hard to impoſe upon us with any falſe notions of religion, or new-fangled modes of worſhip. We ſhould be able to give every duty its juſt value, and not be apt, as it too frequently happens, to lay a greater ſtreſs upon ſome things than God has laid upon them, and to make others more inconſiderable than they really are in God's account. In a word, we ſhould not want a very good and uſeful rule to ſteer ourſelves by in all caſes and circumſtances that we happen to be engaged in, where the expreſs laws of God ſeem either to be ſhort, or too obſcure. Let us all therefore be diligent and frequent in reading the goſpels of the New-teſtament, wherein the hiſtory of our Saviour's life is recorded.

And

And let us from hence thoroughly acquaint ourſelves with the manner of his converſation, and obſerve what a perſon he was; what kind of genius and diſpoſition he had; what were the great ends and deſigns he purſued in all his actions; what duties of religion he was moſt zealous in; how in ſuch and ſuch occurrences he behaved himſelf: And when we have ſo done, let us, in theſe things, ſeriouſly propoſe him to our imitation; ſo ſhall we not fail of the aforeſaid benefits.

Now, if we conſult thoſe ſacred writers, we cannot, in the firſt place, avoid obſerving how devout a perſon our Saviour was; and that both in public and private. Of his devotions in public he gave a very early inſtance, when being brought to Jeruſalem by his parents (which was when he was but twelve years old) he conſtantly frequented the temple: That was the place where they found him after they had three days miſſed him, being in their journey homewards. And when they told him how long they had been ſeeking him, and ſeemed to complain that he had abſented himſelf from them, his anſwer is very remarkable, Luke ii. 49. *How is it*, ſaith he, *that ye ſought me? Wiſt ye not that I muſt be in my father's houſe?* Our tranſlation doth indeed render it, *Wiſt ye not that I muſt be about my Father's buſineſs?* But this ſenſe, in the judgment of the moſt learned critics, doth not ſo well ſuit with the ſignification of the words: The phraſe ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μου, being moſt naturally to be expounded *in my father's houſe*; and ſo ſome of the beſt interpreters, both antient and modern, have tranſlated it. This then is our Saviour's anſwer: Ye needed not, O my parents, have gone far to ſeek me; for if ye had well conſidered either the office I am

deſigned for, or the duty I owe to my heavenly Father, ye might eaſily have concluded that his houſe, his holy temple, was the place where ye might have found me, it being there that my buſineſs chiefly lies. And what he now declared, he made good in his practice all his life after. He was conſtantly preſent at the public aſſemblies appointed by law for the worſhip of God in all places where he had his abode. Nor do we ever find, that either he himſelf held ſeparate religious meetings from the eſtabliſhed Jewiſh church, or encouraged others ſo to do. On the contrary, when he was in the country, he failed not to frequent the ſynagogues on the ſabbath-day, which were the places of public worſhip there. And when he was at Jeruſalem, he was, as he himſelf tells us, *daily in the temple:* tho' yet he knew that the ſynagogue worſhip was not commanded by any expreſs law of God but was only of human inſtitution. And as for the temple, tho' it was a place of worſhip of God's own appointment, yet he knew, and declared that the ſervice of it was juſt upon the point of expiring, and that the time was coming when men ſhould no longer worſhip there, John iv.

How religious was he in obſerving all the ſolemn feſtivals of the Jewiſh church, not only thoſe that were of God's appointment, (as the ſabbaths, and the three great feaſts of the paſſover, pentecoſt, and the tabernacles) but thoſe alſo that had no other authority but what the laws of the land could give them? As we have an inſtance in the feaſt of the dedication, for the ſolemnizing of which we find our Saviour making a journey to Jeruſalem, tho' yet that feſtival was only of human appointment. John x. 22.

How

How zealous an assertor was he of the reverent usage of places devoted to God's service? For he would not endure that the house of God should be put to a common use, but whipped out those that bought and sold in the temple (tho' yet it was only such things they bought and sold as were for sacrifices and oblations to God) declaring that the house of God was a house of prayer to all nations, and therefore ought not to be made a place of merchandize.

How ready was he to submit to all the rates and taxes that were imposed for the repairs of the temple, and the defraying of the charges of the public worship there? Insomuch, that tho' he was very poor, and was besides a privileged person, yet he would be at the expence of a miracle rather than not pay the half shekel that was demanded of every son of Israel, as a tribute to the house of God. Matt. xvii. 24.

Any one now that reads and considers these passages of our Saviour's life, cannot but see a wide difference between his principles, and temper, and carriage in these matters, and those of many of his followers in our days. Several there are among us that would be thought christians, who are so far from being duly and constantly attendant on the public worship of God, that they rarely join in it at all, except invited by curiosity, or to save themselves from the reproach of being infidels, and of no religion. Others are zealous for a public worship, and do constantly attend it: But unhappy it is for them, and for us, that we cannot worship God in the same way, but are parcelled out into several communions. Sure, every good man should think, that it is not a little thing that should divide us from the established church, when he considers that our Saviour paid such regard to the pub-

lic eſtabliſhments, that he made no ſcruple of communicating in the ſervices and liturgies of the temple and ſynagogue of his time; which yet certainly were not the perfecteſt and moſt unexceptionable, ſince the Scribes and Phariſees had the chief management of them.

I might go on in comparing our Saviour's practices with ſome modern ones, and ſhewing the difference between them as to all the other inſtances I have mentioned out of his life: But I take no delight in ſuch a ſubject, and therefore will purſue it no further.

All that I meant by the paſſages I have quoted, was, to give you ſome kind of taſte of what nature our Saviour's public devotion was; from whence you may eaſily gather, that if we mean to copy out our Saviour's example, and to be devout as he was, it will concern us to take all opportunities, that our occaſions will allow us, of worſhipping God in public, and not think it ſufficient to ſay our prayers in private. It will concern us, eſpecially on the ſolemn days appointed for this end, never to abſent ourſelves without very great reaſon. It will concern us likewiſe to worſhip God in public, according to the laws and conſtitutions of the place where we live, unleſs it do plainly and evidently appear to us that there is ſomething in the eſtabliſhed worſhip that we cannot join in without ſinning againſt God. It will concern us alſo, when we are at the public aſſemblies, to behave ourſelves decently and reverently, as remembering we are in the preſence of God; and at all other times likewiſe to make a difference between the houſe of God and houſes to eat and drink in, as St. Paul diſtinguiſhes them. Laſtly, it will concern us to contribute, according to our meaſures and proportion,

to the maintenance of a decent ſolemn worſhip of God among us. All theſe particulars may, I think, be gathered from theſe paſſages of our Saviour's life that I have now quoted to you.

Theſe inſtances may ſerve to give you a taſte of our Saviour's devotion in public, and of the nature of it, and of what principles he was acted by, and what his temper and carriage was in matters relating to the outward worſhip of God. Application hereof I make none. I leave that to be made by every one's ſelf, as he finds occaſion for it.

But farther, which deſerves our ſpecial conſideration: Our Saviour was not more exemplary in his devotions in public than he was in private ones. He was much converſant with God by prayer and meditation. He frequently took occaſions of retiring himſelf from all buſineſs and company, that he might the more freely contemplate, and the more intenſely fix his thoughts upon ſpiritual things, and the more ardently pour out his ſoul to God, and enjoy communion with him; and very conſiderable portions of time did he ſpend in ſuch devout privacies. When the time came that he was to enter upon his office, which was at his baptiſm, we find he prepared himſelf for it, by a retirement of forty days, which he ſpent in faſting and prayer, in conflicting with the devil, and in all the exerciſes of faith, and truſt, and devotion towards God, (in imitation of which our forty days faſt of Lent was appointed.) Here he gained his firſt victory and triumph over the devil and his kingdom; and here he experienced all the ſweetneſs of an uninterrupted converſe with God and angels, and found the influences of it his whole life after.

And as he thus began the great work committed to him, so in the same manner he carried it on, though never any lived a more public life than he did; though never any was more crowded with company, or had his hands fuller of business than he had; yet nevertheless he would either find, or make, his times for his privacies and devotions: If he could not have it in the day, yet would he take it from his rest in the night; nay, sometimes in such portions as to continue a whole night in these his retirements, as you may see in the 1st of St. Mark ver. 35. Luke vi. 12.

This practice of our Saviour's may convince us how necessary it is that we should be frequent and diligent in the performance of our private devotions; that we often take occasion to abstract ourselves from worldly business, that we may the better be at leisure for pious thoughts and meditations, for devout prayer and other religious exercises. If our Saviour found it needful so to do, who had attained to the perfection of virtue, who had a constant presence of mind, who was master of himself and his business, and could not be supposed easily to be prevailed upon by any temptation either from without or within; how absolutely needful will it be for us to put this duty in practice, who are pitiful, sorry, weak creatures, apt every moment to be distracted by worldly objects, and to be drawn away by the temptations and allurements of sin that are round about us.

People may imagine what they please about the mighty feats that may be performed through the strength of a good resolution. But when all this is done, they will find that there is no getting such a victory over their lusts and corruptions; no living such a christian life, as the gospel requires of us, without the practice

of

of earneſt and ardent prayer to God, and a conſtant attendance to reading and meditation, and other ſuch devout exerciſes. Though we have formed our purpoſes, as we think, never ſo ſtrongly, and doubt not but we ſhall be ſufficiently able to ſtand upon our guard; yet, if we do not daily apply ourſelves to the throne of grace for ſtrength, and influence, and ſupport; if we do not frequently take times to recollect, and renew our reſolutions, and fortify our minds by ſtrong conſideration, by repeating to ourſelves the great obligations we have to God, and the abſolute neceſſity there is of forſaking our ſins, and purſuing a courſe of virtue and holineſs; and laſtly, by fixing our thoughts on the vaſt, immenſe rewards that await us at the end of our pilgrimage, if we behave ourſelves worthily: I ſay, if we do not daily give ourſelves to the practice of theſe things, how good ſoever at the preſent our intentions and purpoſes may be, yet there is little hopes we ſhall make any great progreſs or advancement in chriſtianity, but ſhall at laſt inſenſibly ſink down into a ſtate of careleſſneſs and indifferency as to thoſe matters, if not return to a worldly, ſenſual, or vicious life.

But, ſecondly, let us propoſe our Saviour to ourſelves as a perſon that, as he was very devout towards God, ſo was he alſo very diligent in the buſineſs he had to do in the world. He did not ſo ſpend his time in ſolitude and abſtractions, as to hinder the diſcharge of any of the works of his calling. On the contrary, he lived more publickly, becauſe of his frequent privacies. His retirements ſerved for no other purpoſe, than to make him more active and vigorous in doing good when he came into company. He ſo managed his devotions towards God, that they were no obſtructions,

but a great furtherance of the duties he owed unto men; and hereby, as he gave us the true notion and meaſures of a perfect life, ſo did he effectually confute the ſuperſtitious fancies, that too many of his followers have entertained concerning religion.

There are a ſort of men, we know, in the world, that place the perfection of chriſtianity in living at a diſtance from the concernments of the world. With them, to ſerve God in the beſt way, is to dwell in a wilderneſs, or to be cloiſtered up within the walls of a monaſtery, and to ſit looſe from all the buſineſs of common life. And ſo far hath this notion of religion obtained, that none are accounted among the number of the religious, but thoſe that have taken upon them this kind of life. I wiſh there were not alſo ſome among us that are too much popiſh in this reſpect, tho' they yet ſufficiently hate the name of papiſts. Are there not thoſe that make religion wholly to conſiſt in doing of duty, as they call it? If they do but go to prayers often enough, and hear ſermons enow, and ſpend their time in reading godly books, and ſuch other exerciſes and amuſements, they think it is all that is required of them; it is with them the ſum and perfection of religion.

God forbid that I ſhould blame any body for doing theſe things! On the contrary, I would encourage every one in the practice of them: for, as I ſaid before, they are neceſſary duties; ſo neceſſary, that it is impoſſible to be religious, to any great purpoſe, without a conſcientious reſpect unto them. But this is the thing I blame, the thinking that we have no other work to do in the world but this. The being ſo taken up with theſe things, as to neglect all the other weighty buſineſs of our callings, and the duties which

which our families, our neighbours, our country do call for at our hands. As God hath not confined religion to cloiſters and deſarts, ſo neither hath he ſhut it up in churches or cloſets: But he hath ſo contrived it, that it may flouriſh in our cities, and in our fields, in our ſhops, and in our markets, even in all the places where our employment lies. God never intended that religion ſhould be an enemy to buſineſs and an active life; but rather an inſtrument to promote the one, and encourage the other. We then ſerve God beſt, when we make our religious offices and contemplations a means to advance the diligent purſuit of our callings, and the doing good in the world. We are then moſt devout, when we moſt benefit others. And it is the moſt acceptable ſacrifice to God, to be uſeful in our generations.

This, I am ſure, was the thing that our Saviour propoſed to himſelf: For tho', as I ſaid, he had his time of retirement, wherein he gave himſelf up to meditation and prayer, yet the deſign hereof was, that he might the next moment more illuſtriouſly appear in the world as a pattern of good works. His devotions did not ſpend themſelves in unprofitable ardors, and for his own content and ſatisfaction only, but they influenced his actions, and made him more buſy, more vigorous in the diſcharge of that employment that God had committed to him: Nay, whenever the duties of his calling and the duties of devotion, properly ſo called, came into competition, we find that he made the latter give way to the former; as we have a famous inſtance in his preferring acts of charity before the exact obſervation of the ſabbath. And he backed his practices herein with a memorable axiom, which he had made a ſtanding rule in all

ſuch caſes, that *God will have mercy, and not ſacrifice.* Not that to offer ſacrifices was not a duty, or that God would refuſe them when they were devoutly offered; but that of the two he rather delights in works of mercy; and that if both cannot come together, the former muſt give place; we then beſt expreſſing our love to God, *whom we have not ſeen*, when we expreſs our love to men, *whom we have ſeen*, as St. John tells us.

And this leads me to the third thing, wherein we are to propoſe our Saviour to our imitation, (and it ſhall be the laſt I ſhall conſider at this time) namely, his boundleſs love and charity.

Of all his other virtues and excellent qualities, this was moſt conſpicuous in him, and this was that which he moſt recommended to our practice. His whole life was but one continued illuſtrious expreſſion of kindneſs and charity. Never was any perſon in the world known to be ſo ſweet, ſo obliging, ſo compaſſionate ſo kind, as was our Lord Jeſus. How eager, how inſatiable a thirſt had he to do all the good he could to mankind! How did he ſeek opportunity to oblige and to benefit every body! He went up and down to ſee who ſtood in need of his preſence and aſſiſtance, either for ſoul or body; and whoſo did, never failed of it. So intent was he upon doing offices of charity to others, that he often neglected himſelf, and would rather deny himſelf the due ſatisfactions of nature, than that they ſhould not be benefited. How many ſick perſons did he reſtore to their health, blind to their ſight, and lame to their joints, and dumb to their ſpeech, and poſſeſſed and diſtracted perſons to their right minds? Nor was he leſs kind to the ſouls than the bodies of men. How zealous, how conſtant,

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how laborious, how indefatigable was he in preaching the glad tidings of God's grace and favour to all poor ſouls! How did he take every opportunity of making men better by his diſcourſes! No converſation that he was engaged in, though the ſubject of it was never ſo ordinary and indifferent, but he would improve it to the purpoſes of doing good to mens ſouls, taking every occaſion that offered itſelf in diſcourſe, to raiſe up the minds of the hearers from carnal and ſenſible things, to ſpiritual and heavenly.

Oh, with what plainneſs and condeſcenſion would he inſtruct the ignorant! With what power would he convince gainſayers! With what freedom, and with what authority would he reprove vice and ſin where-ever he found it!

Oh, how gently would he deal with weak perſons, never breaking a bruiſed reed, nor quenching the flax that had the leaſt ſmoak in it!

Oh, how affectionately would he embrace all thoſe that came unto him, and how tenderly would he even weep over thoſe that obſtinately refuſed their own mercy! witneſs, the kind tears that ran down his cheeks when he beheld his incorrigible city. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem,* (ſaith he) *thou that killedſt the prophets, and ſtoned them that were ſent unto thee! How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! but now your houſe is left unto you deſolate:* and then the gentle Jeſus wept. What ſhould I ſay more of the large, intenſe, univerſal charity and good-will with which our Saviour endeavoured to oblige the world. The time would fail to reckon up the inſtances of it. The ſum of all is, as he lived a miracle of love, ſo he died one. That ſame Jeſus, who had every moment

ment of his life been doing good to ſome one or other; and that ſame Jeſus, that had never received any other requital from the world for all this goodneſs, but affronts and injuries, contempt and reproaches; yet this ſame Jeſus, ſo far was his love from being abated by all this unworthy uſage, that, as if what he had hitherto done for mankind had ſignified nothing, he offers up his precious life as a ranſom for the world: He voluntarily ſubmits to all the outrages that malice could invent, to lewd mockings, and buffetings, and ſcourgings, to an unjuſt ſentence of an unjuſt judge, to a cruel, painful, ignominious death in ignominious company.

This did the moſt innocent, the moſt virtuous, the moſt noble of mankind do, that he might purchaſe happineſs for the world, not for his friends only, but for his enemies, even thoſe very enemies that thus contumeliouſly treated him; and at the ſame time that they were expreſſing the utmoſt of their cruelties and malice againſt him, loading him with new torments, did not only forgive them, but with a generoſity without example, prayed to God to forgive them alſo; nay, and made excuſes and apologies for them, *Father*, (ſaith he) *forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Oh, how heroical was this goodneſs! How unparallel'd was this kindneſs! Who can declare the greatneſs and the ſtrength, the height and the depth of thy love, O thou great benefactor to mankind! We can never utter it, but we ſtand amazed at it, and we will for ever adore it. O holy and immaculate Jeſus! Bleſſed, for ever bleſſed be thy glorious name, O thou king of love, for thy inexhauſted treaſures of love towards us, and the excellent example thou haſt hereby given to us.

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And now we have ſome part of the picture of our bleſſed Saviour, tho' it muſt be confeſſed it is very rudely drawn, and infinitely ſhort of the original; yet theſe are the lineaments in which he himſelf deſired chiefly to be expreſſed and repreſented to the ſons of men. This is the temper, and theſe are the qualities which he was moſt of all to be known by, and which God moſt valued in him, and which he himſelf hath moſt laid his commands upon us to imitate him in.

And Oh, that we would ſo long and ſo earneſtly fix our eyes upon this loving Saviour, as to be transformed into his love!

Oh, that we were ſo affected with his goodneſs, as ourſelves to become all goodneſs, all kindneſs to our brethren! Oh, that this flame of love that was in him would ſeize upon our hearts, and utterly turn out of them all ſelf-love and narrowneſs of ſpirit, that we, with as extended arms as Jeſus, did embrace the whole creation of God! Oh, when will the time come, that, laying aſide all piques, and quarrels, and contentions, all hatred and animoſity, all parties and factions, all wrath, and bitterneſs, and evil-ſpeaking, all malice and cenſoriouſneſs, all fourneſs and moroſeneſs of temper; we ſhall be kind and affectionate one to another, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven us, doing all the good we can, obliging all ſorts of perſons, as much as is in our power, being eaſy of acceſs, ready to do kindneſſes, relieving, according to our abilities, every one's neceſſities, and, as much as in us lies, ſettting forward the ſalvation of all men.

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This is to imitate Jesus; this is to walk as we have him for an example; and in vain do we call ourselves his disciples, if we do not thus walk, if we do not possess ourselves of this spirit and temper. If we would have recourse to Jesus himself, and desire to know of him what evidences he would have us give to him, and to the world, that we are truly his followers and disciples, he hath already resolved us, us, John xiii. 34. *Hereby* (saith he) *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* And if we further desire to know of him how we must love one another, what kind of love he expects from us; he hath, in the foregoing verse, told us that also: *A new commandment* (saith he) *give I unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye love one another.*

Away therefore with all other marks of christianity that fall short of this. Let us have never so much knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel; let us have never so strong a faith in Christ, though it were even effectual for the removing of mountains; let us be never so orthodox in our opinions; let us preach and pray never so fluently and affectionately; nay, though we spoke with the tongues of men and angels; nay, though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give ourselves to be burnt for martyrs, yet, if we have not the true love and charity that was in Jesus, all signifies nothing. This the apostle St. Paul does largely and eloquently set forth to us in the whole 13th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians.

And so much for my third general point. Other particulars remain to be spoken to, which I shall re-

reſerve to another occaſion. In the mean time I will conclude this diſcourſe with a collect of our liturgy:

Almighty God, who haſt given thy only Son to be unto us both a ſacrifice for ſin, and alſo an enſample of godly life; give us grace, that we may alway moſt thankfully receive that his ineſtimable benefit, and alſo daily endeavour ourſelves to follow the bleſſed ſteps of his moſt holy life, thro' the ſame Jeſus our Lord.

To whom, with the Father, &c.

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SERMON IV.

CHRIST's humility, and meekneſs, and acknowledging God in his actions.

1 PET. ii. 21.

Leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps.

THE laſt time, I gave an account of ſome of thoſe particular virtues and qualities that our Saviour was moſt eminent and remarkable for, and in which he chiefly propoſed himſelf as an example to us; and here the firſt thing I inſtanced in, was his exemplary devotion, both public and private; the ſecond was his diligence in the diſcharge of the duties of his calling; and the third was his fervent love and charity to mankind. I now proceed to ſome others.

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The fourth great inſtance, wherein we are eſpecially to propoſe our Saviour to our imitation, is his wonderful humility. In this quality, and that other of meekneſs, (which never fails to accompany it, and of which I ſhall ſpeak more by and by) he himſelf doth particularly recommend himſelf as a pattern to us, in that memorable paſſage in the 11th of St. Matthew, laſt verſe, *Come unto me* (ſaith he) *all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refreſh you; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls.*

And certainly a greater example of humility and lowlineſs there never was, tho' he knew that both upon the account of the excellency of his perſon and the dignity of his office, he was the greateſt of the ſons of men, yet he made ſuch condeſcenſions as never man did.

Was it not an aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion for the greateſt prince in the world, to make his firſt entrance upon earth in no nobler a guiſe and appearance, than as the ſon of a poor maid eſpouſed to a carpenter, and to take up his firſt lodging in no better a place than a manger? Was there ever ſo great an expreſſion of lowlineſs of mind, as that he who could command all the world, ſhould become a ſervant to all the world? And yet thus did our bleſſed Saviour all the time he lived. He that was the ſovereign of men and angels, yet took upon him the form of a ſervant. He, of whom God himſelf had ſaid, *Let all the angels of God worſhip him*; and of whom it is ſaid, that, *de facto, the angels of God came and miniſtred unto him*, yet ſaith of himſelf, that *he came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter.* And this ſaying he made good in all the periods of his life; for

for while he was under the tuition of his poor parents, he faithfully ſerved them, being, as St. Luke tells us, *ſubject unto them.* So ſubject indeed, that, if we may believe Juſtin Martyr, he ſubmitted himſelf to follow his father's trade and occupation; and of this truly we have ſome intimation in the 6th of St. Mark. For whereas in other places he is, by way of reproach, called the carpenter's ſon, in that place he is called the carpenter; from whence one may probably gather, that, during his minority, he profeſſed the ſame art that his reputed father Joſeph did.

After he came to his own diſpoſal, and to a more public employment; he ſtill made good the character of a ſervant; he had nothing of outward pomp or greatneſs in his circumſtances, that might attract mens eyes, and recommend him to the eſteem of the world. On the contrary, the way of living that he choſe, was mean and poor, his attendants a company of fiſhermen, his income and revenue what providence ſent him and the charity of others beſtowed upon him, living from hand to mouth, and waiting upon God for his daily bread. It is true, the beams of his divinity ſhone ſometimes ſo brightly through this cloud of his outward circumſtances, in the mighty works that he did, that the people were ſtruck with admiration of him, and thought him worthy of a throne and empire, and would have inveſted him therewith. St. John tells us, that once they would by force have made him a king. But our humble Saviour would not ſo quit his innocent poverty and privacy, but withdrew himſelf from them, leaving them to gueſs at what he afterward declared to Pilate, that *his kingdom was not of this world.*

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But the meanneſs of his appearance, and his contempt of worldly greatneſs, were not the only inſtances of his humility: indeed if they had, he had not been ſo recommendable to us upon that account; for tho' he might prefer a cottage before a throne, yet in that cottage he might be imperious enough among his own domeſtics. But ſo far was he from that, that after he had ſeveral times rebuked his own family for their contentions about precedence, and their diſputes who ſhould be greateſt, telling them often, that he that was the leaſt and humbleſt among them, ſhould be the greateſt in his eſteem, he at laſt, in his own perſon, gives them ſuch a ſurprizing example of humility and condeſcenſion, as, if it was conſidered, would for ever put an end to all their ambitious thoughts and purſuits. He waſhed the feet of his diſciples one by one, and told them withal, that the reaſon he did it for, was, that they might do ſo likewiſe one to another. *Ye call me* (ſaith he, John xiii. 13, 14, 15.) *Maſter, and Lord: and ye ſay well; for ſo I am. If I then your Lord and Maſter have waſhed your feet, ye alſo ought to waſh one another's feet: For I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done unto you.* O how ought the conſideration of theſe things to take down that high ſpirit, as we call it, that reigns in too many of us, to abate that tumour of pride and ambition and vain-glory, which is too apt, God knows, to blow up our minds! Oh, what a rebuke hath our Saviour here given to all that we call great, and brave, and rich, and magnificent in the world! How little valuable in the eyes of God hath he, by this his example, made it appear to be; and how ridiculous hath he rendered thoſe lofty looks, and that ſurly ſtatelineſs, that too often attend it!

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Can any one that calls himſelf a diſciple of Chriſt, and ſeriouſly reflects upon theſe paſſages of the life of his maſter, be eaſily proud of that wealth, or thoſe titles, that fortune has given him above others? Who art thou, that thou ſhouldeſt value thyſelf upon the nobleneſs of thy birth, or of thy relations, when thy Lord was born in the ſtable of an inn? Who art thou, that thou ſhouldeſt pride it in thy rich cloaths, and thy great poſſeſſions, and thy ſplendid equipage, and thy ſumptuous way of living, and deſpiſe all others that are inferior to thee in theſe reſpects, when he, whom thou adoreſt, was meanly clad, and lived in great poverty, and had not ſo much as a houſe to lay his head in? Who art thou, that thou ſhouldeſt be ſo difficult and inacceſſible, and ſo mortally offended, if every punctilio of place, and ceremony, and addreſs be not obſerved towards thee, when the perſon, by whoſe name thou calleſt thyſelf, and whoſe life thou pretendeſt to copy out, vouchſafed even to waſh the very feet of his ſervants, and commanded thee to go and do likewiſe? Not that we are to think that theſe inſtances of our Lord's humility and ſelf-denial do oblige any of his followers according to the letter: Far be it from any chriſtian to think, that he is bound, by virtue of our Saviour's example in theſe particulars, to throw away his rich attire, or to take upon him a voluntary poverty, or to lay aſide his titles of dignity, or to refuſe thoſe reſpects or diſtances that are due to his quality. No, no: chriſtianity doth noway favour the principles of quakers or levellers; it certainly allows, and the conſtitution of human affairs neceſſarily requires, that there ſhould be different orders and degrees of men; that there ſhould be ſuperiors and inferiors, and men of all ranks and qualities;

lities; and that every man, according to his degree, ſhould have his different way of living, and a different reſpect paid to him. Thoſe that are placed in a higher ſphere, ought to be diſtinguiſhed by ſeveral outward badges and characters from the common crowd of mankind. And whoever hath a plentiful portion of outward goods allowed him in this life, may, without offence, freely enjoy them, not only for the ſupply of his neceſſities, but even for his conveniency and delight. A man may be a good chriſtian, and yet wear rich cloth, and fare ſumptuouſly, and have a great retinue, and receive the reſpects, and keep the diſtances that are due to the poſt and ſtation he maintains in the world.

All that the example of our Lord calls for at our hands in this matter, is, that we do not one jot the more eſteem ourſelves, or undervalue others, upon account of theſe outward things; but that we be affable, and courteous, and ready to ſerve others in the meaneſt inſtances, whenever it is in our power; that we be poor in ſpirit in the midſt of our wealth, or ſtate, or bravery; that we uſe this world as if we uſed it not; that we keep our hearts ſo unintangled by it, ſo looſe from it, that we never forget God, nor our neighbour, nor ourſelves, ſo long as we poſſeſs it; and are heartily willing to part with it the next moment, if the cauſe of God or virtue doth require that we ſhould. Whoever is thus qualified, thus diſpoſed and prepared, is a true follower of our Lord Jeſus in his humility, and poverty, and condeſcenſion, let his outward circumſtances and way of living be never ſo pompous and magnificent.

But beſides our Saviour's infinite condeſcenſion, he gave us other evidences of a great humility, which

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it will highly concern us to imitate him in. He was perfectly dead to the praiſe of men, and ſtudied only to approve himſelf to God. So far was he from oſtentating himſelf, from catching at the applauſe of the people, that he ſeemed ſtudiouſly to conceal all thoſe qualities and actions of his that might procure it. When he had done any great work that was praiſe-worthy, he was ſo far from publiſhing it himſelf, that he often laid a ſtrict charge upon thoſe that had received the benefit of it, that they ſhould tell no man. No man, with a thouſandth part of his excellencies, and perfections, and heroical actions, ever made ſo little a noiſe in the world; nay, even then, when his virtues and wonderful works became ſo illuſtrious, that they could not be any longer concealed, yet even then he was ſo far from pleaſing himſelf in this, or aſſuming any praiſe to himſelf upon account thereof, that, on the contrary, he attributed nothing to himſelf, but gave all to his Father, aſcribing the whole glory to him. *I can do nothing* (ſays he) *of myſelf; the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is juſt, becauſe I ſeek not my own, but the will of my Father which hath ſent me.* When the woman, being ſtruck with admiration of his wonderful preaching, and his wonderful works, cried out in a tranſport, *Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee ſuck!* See how he turns this acclamation, that ſeems to reflect ſome glory upon himſelf, to quite another purpoſe, namely, to the encouraging the by-ſtanders in virtue; *Yea, rather* (ſays he) *bleſſed are thoſe that do the will of my Father.*

This now is that divine humility we are all to labour after. We are not to think them the humbleſt

perſons that make the largeſt declarations againſt themſelves, and entertain all companies with their own infirmities; for this poſſibly may be only an art to catch praiſe: no, nor thoſe that are really ſenſible of their ſeveral defects, that know their own poverty, and how far a great many others do outſtrip them in ſeveral accompliſhments; for this is not always ſo much an effect of virtue, as of the ſoundneſs of a man's underſtanding; for it would argue the man to be a fool, if he had other thoughts of himſelf: Much leſs is it the perfection of humility to think one's ſelf the worſt, or the meaneſt, or the moſt contemptible of mankind; for it is certain ſuch a notion of a man's ſelf cannot be true in all inſtances; there can be but one of mankind that is the worſt, or the meaneſt, or the like. And therefore, if all men be obliged, upon the account of humility, to think themſelves that man, it is manifeſt that all of them, except one, hath falſe apprehenſions of himſelf. And ſure it can be no part of any man's virtue to think otherwiſe of himſelf than he really is. But he is the true humble man, and moſt imitates our Saviour, who, though he knows he is poſſeſſed of many excellencies and virtues, which perhaps others have not, though he knows he doth many commendable actions, which ought juſtly to render him eſteemed and taken notice of by others; yet he is not at all the more puffed up for this; his deſigns are braver and greater than to ſeek himſelf in any thing that he doth. Vain-glory, and the deſire of praiſe, is no ingredient in any of his actions. On the contrary, provided he but do the work that God ſent him hither to do, and maintain the poſt in which he is placed, he cares not how meanly and contemptibly he be thought on in the world.

world. So far is he from being his own trumpeter, or from making popular applauſe the end of any thing that he doth, that ſo that the good be done, he matters not whether any body knows that it was he that did it: Nay, tho' inſtead of the acclamations of the neighbourhood, he ſhould be purſued with their cenſures and reproaches, he is not a-whit diſturbed, ſo long as that which auſed them was well intended.

But tho' he be little concern'd for his own praiſe, and be indifferent whether he hath it or no, he is highly concerned that God have his. And therefore, as he very well knows and conſiders, that whatever virtue he hath, whatever good action he doth, is wholly owing to the mercies and favour of God; ſo is he ready always to attribute the glory of all to him, looking upon himſelf as a poor indigent creature, nay, as one that had been worſe than nothing, had he not been made what he is by the divine bounty. So that, with the loweſt proſtration of his ſoul, he continually adores the riches of God's grace to him, acknowledges himſelf to be infinitely unworthy of the leaſt of his mercies, and in every inſtance of his life, whatever he doth, whatever he profeſſeth, whatever he ſuffereth, that any way ſeems to redound to his own praiſe, he refers it all to the goodneſs of his heavenly Father, continually ſaying with David, *Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praiſe.*

Thus have I given you ſome kind of deſcription of the humble man, as our Saviour hath in his own perſon repreſented him. I now paſs on, in the fifth place, to another thing, wherein he hath propoſed himſelf to our imitation, and that is, his extraordinary meekneſs.

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This, as I ſaid before, is one of thoſe qualities that he would have us learn of him; *Learn of me* (ſaith he) *for I am meek and lowly in heart.* And indeed, he that was ſo eminently humble, as has been ſaid, muſt needs be a very meek perſon; this virtue being a natural and neceſſary conſequence of that: All anger, and wrathfulneſs, and haſtineſs of temper, being generally the effects of pride, and an over-weening conceit and fond love of ourſelves. If we truly had thoſe lowly thoughts of ourſelves that we ought to have, we ſhould not be eaſily provoked, or put out of our temper, by any thing that could be offered to us.

But to come to the point. Well might our Saviour bid us learn of him to be meek, for no one elſe could ever ſo teach us as he did. There was nothing of harſhneſs or ruggedneſs in his diſpoſition; but we may truly ſay of him, that he was the quieteſt, gentleſt, eveneſt-tempered man in the world. That which we call good nature, was in him in perfection. He would neither give any offence to others, nor take any offence at any thing that others could ſay or do to him. As he would not be provoked, ſo neither would he willingly provoke any. On the contrary, he was full of humility and courteſy, affable and ſociable, ready to yield all innocent compliances to the perſons with whom he converſed. So that in this ſenſe he was a truly complaiſant perſon, as we expreſs, if we may uſe ſuch a word of ſuch a perſon.

His hiſtory affords inſtances enough for the making this good; witneſs, his receiving little children to his embraces and benedictions, whom yet his diſciples repulſed as troubleſome: His treating kindly all that came to him, and anſwering their queſtions, though ſometimes impertinent enough (except where they

propoſed them on purpoſe for a ſnare to him): His converſing freely with all ſorts of men, even publicans and ſinners, and accepting invitations from them to their tables, whom the ſupercilious phariſees ſo much deſpiſed, that they would not come near them: His vouchſafing his preſence even at a marriage feaſt, and even adding to the entertainment, by a changing of their water into wine, when their own proviſion of wine was ſpent. Thus gentle, thus complying was our bleſſed Saviour in all his converſation. Nor was he more ſtudious to avoid giving offence to others, than he was careful not to take any offence at them: Tho' never any received greater provocations to anger and impatience than he did, yet never was he known to be moved thereby. His ſpirit always kept the ſame calmneſs and evenneſs, nor were ever any undecent paſſionate ſpeeches heard to come from his mouth. How many interruptions in his diſcourſes did he patiently bear? How much injurious contumelious language did he unconcernedly put up? Oh, how great was his mildneſs, when the barbarous inhoſpitable Samaritans ſhut their gates againſt him, and denied him the common civility of paſſengers! He took no notice of it, but meekly went his way. His diſciples indeed took it not ſo well, but were for calling for fire from heaven (as Elias did) to conſume the town; but our Lord was ſo far from approving their motion, that he ſharply rebuked that ſpirit of revenge that was in them. *Ye know not* (ſaith he) *what ſpirit ye are of*; the goſpel ſpirit and diſpenſation is not like that of Elias, but a ſpirit of meekneſs, and patience, and forbearance, and forgiving of injuries. This is the ſpirit you muſt be acted by, if you mean to be my diſciples.

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And a great inſtance of this kind of ſpirit did he afterwards give us, when he was in the baſeſt manner betrayed into the hands of his enemies by one of his own diſciples and domeſtics. Inſtead of reproaching the traytor, or giving him bitter reviling terms, as moſt others in ſuch circumſtances would have done, all he ſaid was, *Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayeſt thou the ſon of man with a kiſs?* And when at the ſame time, thro' the zeal of one of his ſervants in his defence, an officer that came to apprehend him happened to be wounded, ſo far was he from approving this act of paſſion, that he ſtretched out his hand and healed the man. And the ſame meekneſs of behaviour that he ſhewed at his apprehenſion, did he continue all the time of his trials, and to his death. No affronts that the rude ſoldiers could put upon him, no buffettings, no ſcourgings, no mockeries, no ſpitting upon him, no reviling terms, could in the leaſt work him to any diſcompoſure of ſpirit, or make him once complain, or ſo much as to give out one harſh word againſt thoſe that thus treated him. So true was that which the prophet foretold of him, *He gave his back to the ſmiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair.* He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, *yet he opened not his mouth.*

Oh, what an example have we here of meekneſs, and patience, and gentleneſs, and long-ſuffering.

Oh, how can we hear or read theſe things of our Saviour, and not be aſham'd and angry with ourſelves, that we are ſo much unlike him in theſe qualities! How can we call ourſelves his diſciples, and yet continue of ſo froward, ſo peeviſh, ſo wrathful, ſo revengeful a temper as we many of us are! In good earneſt, I doubt there are many among us that paſs

for very good christians, that are exceedingly to be blamed upon this account; tho' they seem to be very well disposed towards God, and to have obtained some victory over many of their other sins and evil affections, yet this of anger, and fretfulness, and impatience, they fatally lie under. Every little thing is able to vex them, and quite puts them out of their humour, they will be angry upon the least occasion; a laughter, or a jest, an unexpected answer, an unforeseen accident, is sufficient to make them lose their temper; if a child be froward, or a servant be negligent, or those they converse with be impertinent; if any thing happens cross to their business, or a small loss doth befal them, or a little pain seize them, or the like, they are quite out of patience; and oftentimes they are put into a rage; and when they are so, they care not in how unseemly language they vent their passion. Oh, how far is this from the temper of the meek and patient Jesus!

But still further are they from it, and much more to blame, that make it a piece of greatness of soul and good-breeding to be quarrelsome, and implacable, and revengeful; that account it a point of honour to be sensible of the least affront, and not to put it up without full satisfaction. What, say they, pocket up an injury without a revenge! He is no gentleman that doth it. Whether that be so or no, I know not; but sure I am, he is no christian that doth it not. No, no; whatever our notions of honour be, if we mean to have any benefit of our christianity, we must be of the temper of the holy Jesus: We must be meek, and gentle, and peaceable, and long-suffering, neither provoking others, nor being easily provoked ourselves, rather suffering evil than doing any, nay,

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and doing good againſt evil; *For hereunto were we called* (ſaith the apoſtle in my text); *hereunto were we called, becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuffered for us, leaving us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

And now I might proceed to diſcourſe of ſome other particular virtues, which were very conſpicuous in our Saviour, and wherein he left us a noble example to follow, ſhining forth as a light to the paths, and a lantern to the feet of all the ages and generations of the world; as for inſtance, his admirable courage and fortitude, his great prudence in the conduct of his life, for the bringing about the ends he propoſed to himſelf; the ingenuous plainneſs and ſimplicity he uſed in all his converſation; and laſtly, his hearty faith and truſt in God, and intire dependance on him, and abſolute reſignation of himſelf to do his will in all things.

But to treat of theſe things particularly, would engage me in too long a diſcourſe, (and I would finiſh my text at this time) and therefore I ſhall only now touch a little upon the laſt of them I now mentioned, namely, his continual reſpect to God in all his converſation; and with that I ſhall conclude.

It cannot but be taken notice of, that in the hiſtory of the great men among the pagans, who have been often recommended to the world for patterns of virtue, there is little of this divine temper of mind to be met with. The pagan heroes ſeem to be ſet out to us rather as ſelf-ſufficient independent beings, than as ſervants and votaries of God Almighty. We meet

with great instances among them of the moral human virtues; such as courage, and justice, and temperance, and gratitude, and moderation, and beneficence, and love to their country, and the like; which indeed we cannot deny to be noble and excellent qualities. But we find little in their story of spiritual and religious virtues, of their love to God, and zeal for his honour and service, and entire dependence upon him in all conditions of life: And yet these are the things that must adorn and perfect human nature, and most of all contribute to the happiness of the world, and of every man in it. This now was a great defect and inconvenience, that the world laboured under till our Saviour's appearance. Their notions of virtue were in a manner wholly calculated for the civil life; and a man among them might be accounted virtuous, tho' he was not sincerely pious: whereas in truth it is of the essence of virtue, that it should proceed from religion. That is the true virtue indeed, let the object of it be what it will, that is founded in a hearty sense of God, and love to him; that inclines a man to live well, and to do good actions, not only because it is decent and reasonable, brave and generous, convenient and useful so to do, but chiefly and principally because God requires it of us; it is his will and pleasure by whom, and to whom, and for whom we live, and tends to his honour and glory that we should thus exercise ourselves. This, I say, is the true notion and idea of that virtue which we ought all to labour after, and in which alone the happiness and perfection of all created natures doth consist: And this is that virtue which christianity (which is the only true philosophy) doth most affectionately and earnestly recommend to our pursuit;

namely, to be so heartily persuaded of the being of God, and of his wisdom, power, goodness, and providence encompassing and watching over all creatures, and to preserve upon our minds such a constant and lively sense of these things, as to love God above all things, to dread his displeasure more than death, to trust in him, and to depend upon him continually, to resign up ourselves entirely to his conduct and government, to live always as in his presence, and to do all our actions, as much as is possible, with a design of recommending ourselves to him.

Oh, what a glorious example hath our Lord Jesus given us as to all these things! He did truly acknowledge God in all his ways; he set God always before him; and the design of all his actions was to do him service. It was, as he himself tells us, *his meat and drink to do the will of his father.* Nor did he propose any other end in all that he did, or all that he suffered, but to bring glory to God's name, and promote his honour in the world. He minded not himself; he had no regard or consideration of his own ease, or convenience, or reputation, or any other thing that is most dear to flesh and blood. But all his aims, all his studies were, that God might be glorified, that his honour and service might be advanced in the world. His whole life was but one continued expression of dependance on the divine providence; for he possessed nothing: nay, he had not so much as the common conveniencies of life to trust to; and yet he lived as chearfully and contentedly by the faith he had in God's goodness, as if he had been possessor of the whole world. It was enough for his support, and enough too to repel the devil, when he tempted him with want of bread, to consider, that *Man liveth not*

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by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. His meaning was, that God, if it pleaſed him, could preſerve life without human means, and that was enough for him to be ſatisfied with his preſent condition. He had no will of his own; but whatſoever pleaſed God, that was his will; and even when the bittereſt cup was given him to drink, that ever was mingled for any of the ſons of men, I mean that dreadful agony which he underwent for our ſins in the garden, and the painful death that followed it; tho' as a man, as partaker of the tenderneſs of human nature, he was ſo terrified at it, that he could not forbear ſaying, *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me*; yet ſo entirely reſigned was he even at that time to the will of God, that he immediately corrects the deſire of fleſh and blood in theſe words, *Yet, O Father, let it not be as I will, but as thou willeſt.* He would have God's will done, whatever it coſt him.

What leſſons now are we to learn from hence? Why, truly, I am afraid almoſt to number them, conſidering how the temper of moſt of us that are his followers generally ſtands. Oh, what a wide difference is there between us (even thoſe we may account the beſt among us) and Jeſus our Lord and maſter, as to theſe things! How narrow and ſelfiſh are our ſpirits! How little regard have we to God's will in all our concernments! Our way is to lay out ourſelves upon a hundred things, and eagerly and ſolicitouſly to purſue thoſe deſigns, but without any regard or deference to the pleaſure of him that made us, and governs us. If our deſigns proſper, we are pleaſed: If we have what we deſire, and can keep what we love, we are at eaſe; but if we be diſappointed, or

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if we happen to lose that dear thing we had set our hearts upon, why then we are angry, we are miserable, we are out of humour, like children, and it requires a great deal of time, and no small pains, to bring ourselves right again. Thus again, as to our trust in God, and dependance on him, we do all of us readily own it as our duty so to do in all circumstances; but, in the name of God, how do we practise it? Why, we are willing to trust God for our livelihood, so long as we have something to live on: We are willing to trust God with any other concern, so long as that concern goes on prosperously: But if our visible supports do chance to fail us, or if the thing we are concerned for seem to go contrary to our desires and expectations, why then our trust in God is gone, and we are as anxious, and as querulous, and as discontented, as if we were no christians; or, as if indeed there was no God that took care of our affairs. The truth is, most of us do live too much without God; though we talk much of him, yet we have little respect to him in our designs and actions. We say our prayers to him perhaps, and have our constant times of appearing before him for religious worship (and assuredly, as things go, even this is a great virtue.) But take us out of our devotions, I doubt God is not much in our thoughts; at least our love, our fear, our sense of him, doth not much influence either our words or our actions. Indeed our conversation, generally speaking, is so managed, as if we were no way concerned with God, had nothing at all to do with him, save just at the time we are making solemn addresses to him. But all this is infinitely different from the spirit and temper of our Lord Jesus, and the way that he lived in the world. If we

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mean to follow his example, we must be religious, as he was; we must endeavour to possess our hearts with such a vigorous sense of God, and his presence and sovereignty over us, as most entirely to devote ourselves to his service; so that the fear, and love, and sense of him, shall have some power and influence upon the government of our whole lives. We must make it the business of every day's conversation to serve him, and promote his interest in the world, and not think we have well acquitted ourselves towards him by now and then offering up a few prayers. We must acknowledge him in all our ways, by owning all the good we do enjoy or hope for to be the mere effect of his bounty; by bearing patiently and quietly all the hard things we suffer, though, as we think, never so undeservedly; by reposing our trust and confidence in him in all the extremities we are reduced to; by applying to him for succour, or direction, or support, under all temptations and difficulties; and lastly, by resigning ourselves entirely (as far as the imperfection of our present state will allow) to his will, being heartily willing to be whatever he would have us to be, being willing to do whatever he would have us to do, and being willing to suffer whatever he thinks fit to lay upon us. This is to love, this is to serve, this is to honour and glorify God, as our blessed Lord and Master did. This is to walk as we have him for an example. And indeed this, and this alone, is the true spirit of christianity, and the true principles from whence all the other duties of our religion, whether they respect our neighbours, or ourselves, will naturally flow. And for your encouragement to labour after such a frame and temper of soul, I will add this, that this is the certain and never-failing method,

thod, not only to ſweeten all the labours and troubles that we weet with in this life, and to make our paſſage through this world, in all conditions and circumſtances, eaſy and comfortable; but alſo to anticipate the joys of heaven, to have ſome ſhare of the happineſs above, even while we live here below, through the ineffable peace, and contentment, and ſatisfaction, and pleaſure, that will continually ariſe in our minds from the having our wills thus united to God's will.

And thus I have ſaid what I intended about the life of our Saviour. God Almighty give a bleſſing to it, that we may all ſo conſider this example which he left, that we may follow his ſteps.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

END of the FIFTH VOLUME.